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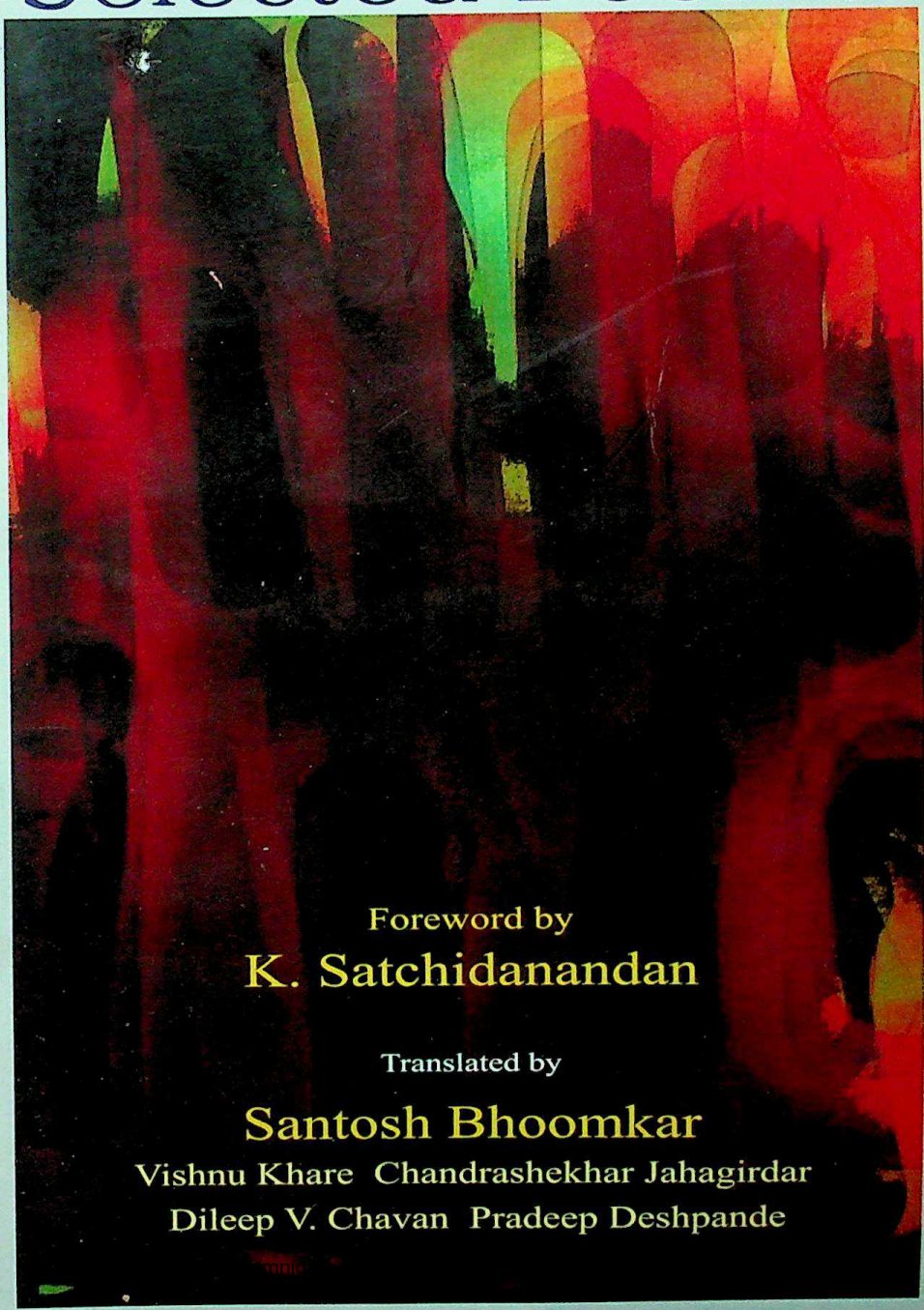
Chandrakant Patil
Selected Poems



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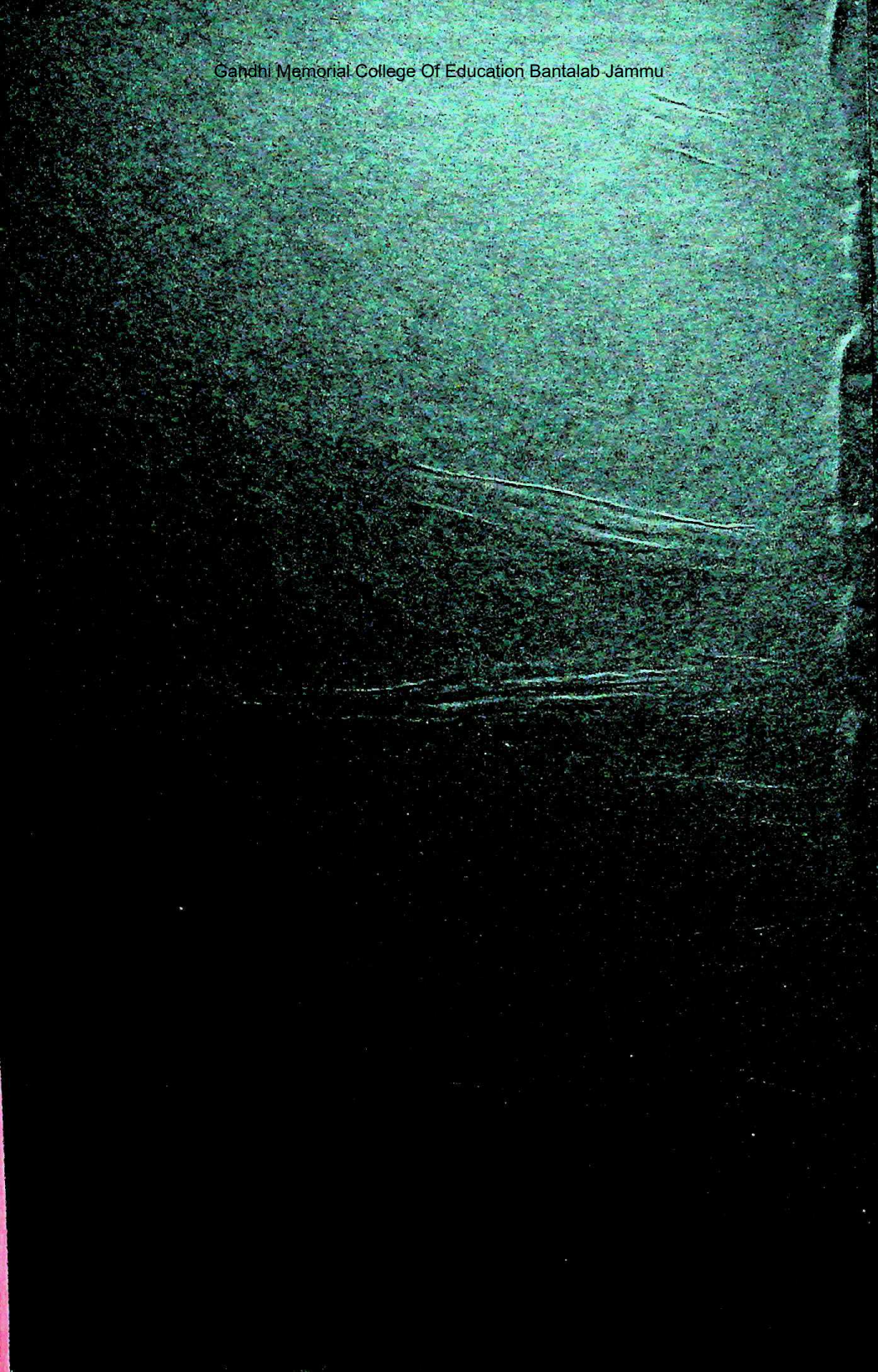

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Chandrakant Patil

is a major bilingual poet, critic, translator and editor from India. He writes in Marathi as well as in Hindi. His anthologies of poems *Nissandarbh* (1973), *Itthambhut* (1992), *Bayka Aani Itar Kavita* (1993), *Dik-kal* (2008), and *Apani Bhasha Ke Sameep* (2008) have been crtically acclaimed. He was one of the leading voices of the Little Magazine Movement in Marathi in the post-Sixtees period. He has played a major role in introducing Marathi writers to the Hindi literary world and vice versa. His translations from/into Marathi and Hindi have also strengthened the bond between the two languages. He is the recipient of more than sixteen prestigious awards including the Sahitya Akademi Award for Translation, Sauhard Samman (Uttar Pradesh Government), Gajanan Madhav Muktibodh Samman (Maharashtra Hindi Sahitya Akademi), Maharashtra Bharati Samman, Maharashtra Foundation (America) etc.

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To Agni & Kshama ji
with best wishes
31.3.23

Chandrakant Patil
Selected Poems

अग्निशेखर एवं क्षमा कौल
पुस्तक संग्रह

Translated from Marathi and Hindi by

SANTOSH BHOOMKAR

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Publisher's Note

Those who know the poet, critic and translator Chandrakant Patil know it well that how difficult it is to persuade him for the publication of his own poems written as well as translated over the period of about forty-five years. Many of his friends had already suggested him to bring out such an anthology. But (for the not so justifiable reasons) he was reluctant to do so. Somehow, he yielded to the persistant efforts of his friends and agreed to the publication of his translated poems. He translated and published the works of others selflessly but remained indifferent to the translation and publication of his own works.

We must acknowledge that Dr. Santosh Bhoomkar's translation of the major part of this anthology has propelled the idea of publication. As most of the poems are translated by Dr. Santosh Bhoomkar, his name has not been mentioned at the end of the each poem. Some of the poems are translated by Vishnu Khare, Chandrashekhar Jahagiradar, Dileep V. Chavan and Pradeep Deshpande and therefore, their names have been specifically mentioned.

Renowned poet, critic and translator K. Satchidanandan's exhaustive and scholarly *Foreword* justifiably and strongly argues in favour of Chandrakant Patil's poetry and establishes its cultural significance in the context of Indian poetry. Dr. A. J. Thomas, a leading Indian poet and the guest editor of *Indian Literature,* has meticulously copy edited this anthology and has also written the blurb. Dr. Anjali Nerlekar, known for her book on post-sixtees Marathi literature has given valuable suggestions and written the blurb. We gratefully acknowledge their contribution to this publication. We are also grateful to the editors who have published some of these poems in their journals and the anthologies.

-Dileep V. Chavan

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Foreword

The Poetry of Chandrakant Patil

K. Satchidanandan

This is a collection that lovers of Indian poetry have long been waiting for. Chandrakant Patil has been writing and translating poetry in Marathi and Hindi for half a century; but his poems, except a few of them, have hardly been available to the pan-Indian poetry community who can have access to them mainly only through English. Four competent translators have now put together a representative and comprehensive selection from Chandrakant Patil's large and diverse oeuvre so that at last it is possible for us not only to savour but also to comment on the aesthetic and social vision of his poetry that has obviously passed through several phases of evolution though he has been a modernist with an eye on the society around him all through his poetic journey. In other words, he has been part of the Marathi avant-garde in the 1960s and 70s and has consistently pursued a contemporary avant garde idiom in his poetry while not being tempted by some of the fashionable techniques and post-modernist vocabulary of more recent Indian poetry.

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I know very well that the term *avant garde* has been a bone of contention among literary theorists. Clement Greenberg in his Avant Garde and Kitsh (1961) argues that the function of the avant garde is to fight the cliché and create new patterns of language. The quantity of communication negatively affects its quality; the common language then becomes entirely devoid of poetry, flat, opaque and prosaic when it has to be washed and cleaned. The reason for the decadence of language is to besought in the spread of capital and the market and if that is so, romanticism, symbolism, aestheticism, modernism and post-Modernism can all be termed *avant garde*. Renato Peggioli also supports this view. However Peter Berger in his *Theory of the Avant Garde* (1984) looks at the *avant garde* as the expression of a counter-consciousness that exists within the market-society. With the rise of the bourgeoisie genius began to be estranged from society and on the other hand it also tried to extricate itself from the pressures of the market. Artists began to feel that art was useless and it could not impact the society of hollow men that they found around them. So they began to focus their energy entirely on language. This gave rise to anti-heroes in fiction and pure aestheticism in poetry. The alienated individual found salvation in the intoxication that beauty provided. Modernism was the high point of this aesthetic rebellion.

There are arguments in India as to whether modernism in poetry was a mode of resistance or of acquiescence. Many 'progressive' writers and theorists think that Indian modernism was nothing but a kind of 'pastiche', a mimicry of the West, a mimetic expression of metaphysical or existential anguish that was exceedingly individualistic or even solipsistic. But I think it unwise to mechanically equate Indian modernism with the Western one even though Indian modernism

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has been impacted by some emancipatory Western models at the level of form. But this can also well be said of other movements including the Romantic and Progressive Movements. What was common to the Indian and Western modernisms was that they were responses to modernity which has been best summed up by Marshall Berman in his book, All that is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity (1982) "To be modern is to find ourselves in an environment that promises us adventure, power, joy, growth, transformation of ourselves and the world- and at the same time that threatens to destroy everything we know, everything we are. Modern environments and experiences cut across all boundaries of geography and ethnicity, of class and nationality, of religion and ideology; in this sense modernity can be said to unite all mankind. But it is a paradoxical unity, a unity of disunity; it pours us all into a maelstrom of perpetual disintegration and renewal, of struggle and contradiction, of ambiguity and anguish. To be modern is to be part of a universe in which as Marx said, 'all that is solid melts into air'."

Perhaps it is no more possible to write the kind of 'pure' 'impersonal' poetry that the Modernists had dreamed of today. 'Will there be poetry in bad times?, asked the German playwright –poet Bertolt Brecht once and replied: 'Yes, poetry about bad times'. I would offer a post-script: 'Poetry against bad times too.' That is why I find Adorno's statement about the impossibility of poetry after Auschwitz no more than an intense expression of anguish. We know the Nazi concentration camps produced a whole corpus of Holocaust poetry by scores of poets from Primo Levi and Paul Celan to Abba Kovner and Nelly Sachs. Only theirs was 'a poetry for the horror-stricken, for those abandoned to butchery, for survivors, created out of a remnant of words, salvaged words,

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created out of uninteresting words from the great rubbish dump' to employ the words of the Polish poet Tadeuz Rosewicz. James Joyce too was being affirmative when he said of writers: "Squeeze us, we are olives." The truth of his statement has been borne out time and again in the traumatic periods of varieties of Fascism, and totalitarianism of diverse hues. Poets from Paul Celan, Eugenio Montale, Federico Garcia Lorca, Miguel Hernandez, Pablo Neruda, Octavio Paz and Cesar Vallejo to WH Auden, Stephen Spender , Kim Chi Ha, Ai Ching and Anna Akhmatova have responded to the horrors of Fascism and State authoritarianism. They were fully aware that silence before fascist onslaught was no less than acquiescence and collaboration in its monstrous project. Pablo Neruda in his 1935 manifesto, *Towards an Impure Poetry* explained his concept of impure poetry thus: " The used surfaces of things, the wear that hands have given to things, the air, tragic at times , pathetic at others, of such things, all lend a curious attractiveness to reality that we should not underestimate..." In 1966, he again said, "I have always wanted the hands of people to be seen in my poetry... I have always preferred a poetry where the fingerprints show: a poetry of loam where the water can sing, a poetry of bread where everyone may eat." He dreamt of a poetry that carried the eternal stamp of humanity outside and inside every object, worn by constant use, full of smoke and sweat, food stains and shame, wrinkles, observations, dreams, prophecies, declarations of love and hatred, stupidities and shocks, doubts and denials and affirmations and celebrations, carrying the dust of distances, smelling of lilies and of piss, impure like a rag, like the body. The Mexican poet Ocatvio Paz defined the poet as a man whose very being becomes one with his words and hence can make possible a new dialogue and the Polish

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poet Czeslaw Milosz said: "In a room where people maintain a conspiracy of silence, one word of truth sounds like a pistol shot.... You who have wronged a simple man/ bursting into laughter at his suffering, Do not feel safe, the poet remembers. You may kill him; a new one is born; Deeds and talks will be recorded"The Indian poet of today is caught in this dilemma: pure ideological commitment as found in the early Progressive poets has become difficult as all ideologies seem to have created their own varieties of authoritarianism. Philosophically it may be possible to disassociate Josef Stalin, Pol Pot, Nicolae Ceausescu, Kim-Il Sung, Enver Hoxa etc from Marx and Communism, but they have definitely shown what any form of totalitarian rule can do to the world. At the same time no poet today can live in an ivory tower and even ivory towers are not free from the winds of change. Even poets who are not apparently 'committed' cannot evade the surrounding reality altogether and some kind of politics, of gender, environment, caste, sexuality, culture or language if not of class is certain to colour their perceptions whether they are conscious of it or not. And no genuine poet can believe in inequality and slavery of any kind. So what is important is to keep the dialogues of poetry alive: with oneself, with others, with nature and with cosmos. And it is these dimensions that often help us evaluate a poet's power of articulation. His commitment to Communism never stopped Pablo Neruda from writing about love or the mysteries of the sky or the sea or even Mayakovsky from transforming the language of poetry altogether. It is true, poets often pass through different phases in their evolution as poets and it is most often impossible to pin them down to a single identity or label them under a single category. This is also true of Chandrakant Patil whose different phases are represented in this collection.

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2

Patil's early poems have a clearly modernist slant, especially in its use of imagery and play with syntax and language. This might have come equally with his familiarity with the poets of the West or the early and later modernists in Marathi like Kusumagraj, B S Mardhekar, P S Rege, Vinda Karandikar, Vilas Sarang, Dilip Chitre and Arun Kolatkar some of whom were also his friends and elder contemporaries. The mood of these poems also reflects the solitariness, morbidity and despair that often characterised early Modernism in most Indian languages. See for example a passage from the very opening poem:

At this odd hour
summer stuck up tightly in the window
or in my eyes
Outside, orphan desolation expanding
on the flown away wide moor,
Melancholic sunlight
rare wounds afflicted by shadows
on the sunlight.....
....Stranded walls of the stiffened houses
like the lines in the painting of the wall
But the wind sometimes blowing outside
is like illusory shaking lines
of a classic painting.
Suddenly with the shrill cry
of a parrot that has scratched
the colour of a tree and flown away

The glass of solitude is broken....
...the sky directionless like me, the space absolute

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Not a single cloud with dampness in it
Nothing visible to the eyes through the window.
My own vision is flying away
In the vast emptiness
Like the sunlight sunk
In the arid river bed of Bindusara

(Stuck Up in the Window)

Again, in 'The Song of an Orphan' the speaker compares his state to that of an orphan. His father left him roaming as a vagabond with a begging bowl like himself. When he died in an accident even his shadow did not wait for the blood to stop. Drunk, he wandered like a wayward wind. Only the jumble of lines on his palm remain a souvenir left by his wanderer-father. And he was the only atonement of the accident that killed his father. Poems like 'All these days', 'That too Dies' and 'Without any Context' are haunted by death, disease, barrenness and homelessness. The world seems broken; life is without a context and the body is slowly consumed by jaundice that seems to spread to the soul. Look at these lines in 'From the Isolation Ward':

Where should everyone stay
All the paths are blocked.
If new ones are trodden
People behind clasp round the neck
With the miracle of God
old people sprout
in front of every door.
God grafts thoughtless eccentricity
On their brains.
The old earn interest from daughters-in-law
On the capital of their sons.

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They play intricate moves difficult than chess
Defeating everyone

The despair here is absolute; there is no way to salvation. The world seems to have aged and the old who sprout from every door are clever in the chess game of using their sons as pawns to make money from marriages. This is indeed a typically Indian situation; but the frustration is more general as can be surmised from the lines that follow. 'Without any Context' too is full of morbid metaphors like 'fruitless trees trying to burst out desperately into blossoms', 'ghostly birds in the devastated sky', 'mossy boulders' and 'barren stones blooming on tombs without context'. Images like 'shattered directions of a mystical hymn', 'ripped rags of reality;, 'the terrible steel doors of eyelashes', 'shattered brain cells', 'dreamless birds', 'motionless rabbit lying dead on the moon', 'butterflies flown away from the large eyeball', 'uncontrollable paroxysm of the mosaic mind', 'shards of the broken bangle of time,' 'disjointed forests, body as 'a hypnotic flower of exhaustion' : a heap of such broken images also characterise the poems in the second section, 'Sympathy'. The dark vision is well summed up in this poem:

Life is a clamour,
A fire of joy and torture,
A line of non-existence
Without any context.

Life is a shadow of stupor
A prey in the flow of time,
Alchemy of non-existence
Without any context.

The long poem on Rosy ('An Introduction to the Essay on Rosy'), a girl the speaker meets accidentally in a shop, marks

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a slight change of mood. Eros and romance make a passing appearance here; Rosy, seen fleetingly in the background of Begum Akhtar's voice, is however like a transient dream as she is soon discovered to be someone else's friend. The poem continues to be in the imagistic mould, with atmosphere added to it along with a very personal touch and the introduction of a character other than the poet himself who was the sole speaker until now.

3

Poems from 'Itthambhoot' recreate the mood of the 60s and the 70s reflected in the Hungry Poetry of Bengal impacted to a great extent by Allen Ginsberg and the Beatles though the poet makes it his own. References to cannabis, LSD, liquor and opium and the recurring question, 'Who Am I' point on the one hand to an air of anarchy and hypnotism and on the other to a spiritual quest, both of which co-existed in many of the poets of the time. The dog trained to leap through the wheel of fire and the sparrow balancing in the mid-air looking still seem two central images that define this series of poems. Attaining a balance between habit and passion, between the intoxication of the womb and the agony of birth and being seems a challenge one can hardly face even while the relationship between the goddess and the lapwing continues to be indivisibly organic. By this time the public begins to emerge in Patil's poetry. First it makes a negative appearance as hate-driven, rioting people .It does not arouse sympathy or make us redefine beauty. But gradually the meaning becomes clearer:

After the first accident
After the passing of so many seasons
Now the essence illumines the implied meaning
That every riot

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Is a public jungle of men
Which burns with hatred.
It is a dried flower of caste and religion
On the tomb of reasoning.

The poet also begins to speak of the economic disparity between the opulent city and the impoverished village and discovers that

A poem is confession,
A poem is penance,
A poem is a glass of water
Slipped out of hands,
A poem is an identity

('Itthambhoot')

He finds many poets migrating to the city as if for a battle, but with rusted weapons. There is growing anger against hypocritical writers that flock to the city in the poems that follow.

They tear off the mechanical parrots
Who vent out voices for which they are trained,
The coquettish mynahs,
Singing songs of highbrow families,
Literary veterans sitting quietly on stools,
Comic bears making you laugh by tickling,
Hyenas longing for prestige
Literary flamingos
Angry and rebellious chameleons
Who change their colours.

('Ibid')

Look at another typical poem of this angry period:

A terribly ugly lady called culture

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Wandering invisible on the roads of a metropolis
the black soot round of black money
on her forehead
wrapping arousing poster all over the body
the other-worldly music rippling through arteries
Chanting of cheers
Gambling for vow
Protection of knives
Murder for the sake of ablution.

Her emaciated fingers fondle
Through experiments of underground reality
In the art galleries
Over Ravishanker's Westernized sitar
Over soft curtains
Through skyscrapers
Through dreamlike reality of five-star hotels

Victorious but corrupt vassal rulers
Conciliating her
Cannot destroy from ghettos
And brothel houses
her illegitimate off springs growing freely.

('Ibid')

The poet's Modernism here takes a political turn which was a major shift that happened in many languages in the 70s and 80s. The Naxalbari and similar peasant movements, the rise of the Dali Panthers in Maharashtra and the literature it produces, the all-India strikes of port workers and railway workers, the beginnings of the Women's Movement- all these made the period a turbulent interlude in the post-Independence history of India. The discontent of the youth was obvious and it got reflected in literature, theatre

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and cinema. The increasing rural-urban divide, the growing economic disparities, huge unemployment, the loss of values in status quo politics, the complete unconcern of the bureaucrats and the political class about the poor, the domination of the upper caste, the othering of the minorities, the marginalisation of the adivasis, the patriarchal hegemony that treated women like slaves: all these enraged the idealists of all ideological hues from Gandhians to Lohyites and Maoists. Poetry's idiom changed accordingly to express the new indignation; words and usages which the aristocratic poetry of earlier periods had banished from poetry made a come-back, syntax was renewed and images became political. With the appearance of characters, poetry turned from monologues to dialogues and became more dramatic. This was also the time when poetry began to be performed before small and large audiences. New cultural groups and organisers and little magazines sprang up across the country, and this was particularly true of languages like Hindi, Marathi, Bengali, Telugu , Kannada , Tamil and Malayalam. Recalling W B Yeats, one can well say, 'a terrible beauty was born'.

The poet recalls how he had renounced Brahminism and flung away the consecrated thread, but now everything was getting entangled in the same thread , ghosts had started to dance, land was trembling under feet and tigers were roaming free roaring all around. The poet also noticed that language was bound up with caste and that too had a role in polarizing the society. He is disillusioned to find that nothing has really changed:

Nothing changes even after
Thirty-one years have elapsed
Except pictures in the schoolbook
The walls shattering dreams

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remain as they are
teachers who do their business
as social prestige
are the same
schools too are the same
which become barren forests
where curiosity uproots creepers of admiration
and broad-leaved plants of imagination
the lotus of ideas wilt in the bud.

('Ibid')

Corruption, irresponsibility, violence: these get articulated in Patil's poetry of this period again and again as termite-eaten brains and streets strewn with blood stains. He realises that 'Only the bait can understand/ The unbreakable bond / of threads in the net'. No theory helps the fish caught in the net and life looks like a complicated theorem that is hard to prove. He realises his failure and the fears that haunt him:

I have firmly held
the frozen time
in one of my hands
and with the second
gathering shards of a shattered glass
through which I would see
new shapes of fear, wonder, unknown emotions
inexpressible emotions grown lively
with new life.

('Ibid')

Yet his creativity helps him survive every pain and every devastated city. His old self at times reappears in lines like *Even then my creativity turns formless into form*

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And ultra-sensuous into sensuous
and unravels inanimate to animate
Through words
My lines descend uncountable spiral stairs
of unexpressed
And reach the ground
And maintaining meeting point of primal loneliness
Forcibly enter the crowd on the road

('Ibid')

But then poet refuses to stay there. This happens to most points at the turning points of their creativity: the past remains a temptation, and sometimes they yield to it but then they move forward. Now that the poet has discovered his identity, he can hardly dismiss it as insignificant. In the poems it comes back to haunt him and his readers alike. The woman spends most of her life in the cattle pen of a joint family leaving behind her childhood, filling her hours with domestic chores and her dreams flower eight times- obviously a reference to her children- one of which fades before time. The son wants to take her out of that pen but he gets in return only her frown, telling him sternly how inconsistent life is. Family and relationships have a strong presence in these poems. In the hospital the poet realises that 'every pain is comprehensive' and the hospital is a temporary 'evaluation' camp where the patient meets death and undergoes its examination. The dying man in the poem, 'How Enthusiastic I had become' is conscious of the end of his creativity; he can only request each of the survivors

I urge you to come
and be my companion as I am going –
from possibility to reality

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from confusion to delusion
from sensation to pain.

Ideas of nothingness, non-being, zero, emptiness, the gradual denial of is-ness seem to haunt the poet in poem after poem even in this period which thus becomes a period of gradual transition than a sudden break.

4

Chandrakant Patil's series on women *Bayka Aani Itar Kavita* (Women and Other Poems) is rich, painful, full of insights and fascinating with its concrete imagery and complete empathy.

O woman
You must be safe
In that cocoon
Stop the flow of your living
For a moment
And take a fossil
Under the rock.

The burden of your non-existence
is increasing on my chest
Moss is gathering on the rock
And there is the fear of slipping
Any moment,

O woman help me
Remove the snare
Around my poem.

(Becoming a Butterfly)

In 'On the Blind Morning' he asks in utter despair :
Why this search
For fresh leaves

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After shedding of trees

Affection, compassion and love, he believes, are the only real sources of strength ('So Long as there was a Cloud of Affection Overhead') The couple's love is mutual in the beginning, but gradually it is shared by others, they no more belong to each other:

At this age
It is unnecessary
To search for
Who we are
Its enough that we are.

(When We Were Not Our Own)

The mystery of being a woman that had fascinated poets like Pablo Neruda also fascinates this poet and at times he sounds like Neruda too:

With the sadness of intensity
the woman is poeticized
and right in the heart of spring drop down
the wings of the butterflies
and right in scorching summer
untimely clouds gather in the sky

Dried up, waterless rivers envelope
the woman's uncanny body
the simultaneous obsession
with sleep and jealousy
lays over the body of the woman,
in broad daylight,
the thin layer of the late night

And the poet looks at her ageing thus:

It must have been a decade

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since the woman's body, its essence squeezed out,
was past its prime
and now in this mild winter
her whole body gets titillated
with the clandestine touch of the Basant Panchami breeze
Now the days of the poem are numbered.

(Being Poeticised)

We are taken to Khajuraho in another poem, 'Being a Woman'. At the Vishwanath temple with its erotic sculptures, a woman suddenly turns recalcitrant while the man is confused.

The woman who had stood there
from the Middle Ages
clasping the male
suddenly threw him off
and stood erect
like a soldier in an army march-past
The male, smiling, complacent, for ages
is suddenly confounded, crestfallen
the woman has become arrogantly triumphant
like the twenty-first century

The man does not understand the woman's act as he has leant only about artha and kama and the dharma of the body; he feels she may have exchanged kama for artha and looks desperately at the male figure on the next panel. And the poet in conclusion says the woman is now thinking of leaving for the city. In yet another poem, 'In Your Mirror' the woman is discovered as a tempestuous ocean breaking its banks, but the man provides an embankment:

Crossing enormous distances
I had come to you

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to be the embankment
of your restless ocean
You subsided.

Elsewhere the poet asks woman to come out of her self-constructed bubble of unreality where she feels she is the queen hanging the sun instead of a lamp in her drawing room and the moon in her bedroom and identifies herself with all the great women of mythology, and join the crowd outside so that the bubble breaks and she is released into the sordid realities of womanhood and of life (Dismantle Your Geodesic Dome) He bemoans the loss of his love's innocence and the romance of the earlier days in another poem (I Recognized You) In 'A Woman in the Bus' we see a woman holding life's frozen luggage' getting neglected and lost In the crowd:

Realities within and without
melt into each other
seeking to destroy the woman

The poet is scared of incompleteness, of art, of dialogues, of love. As he looks at the painting of a ruined building with its distortions, in blurry colours, with things not in their appointed places, it is this fear haunts him again:

Whatever is half
Makes life desolate
Wipe away all that is half
And start the journey
Newly once again.

(What Sort of a Painting Is This)

He tells the woman that she was only an excuse for him to convince himself and that we fail to see the rest of the universe as we are trapped in our own sorrows. The tree is

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healthy and in full bloom; only the branch we hold is termite-infested and fragile.

Except the place where
Our head bangs
all the soil is soft.
Is this fate or
The essence of life
Getting trapped in thoughts
Is futile.
Much is left in this world
Other than man
To devastate a surrounding
For some abstract idea
Or to understand the balance
of the entire universe
excluding the self

(Whatever this World is Like)

The fear of birds makes us scarecrows; the winds of sorrows cannot enter the void. Maturity is this kind of a state where nothing affects us too much and we learn to see gains and losses in a balanced state of mind. A middle-aged middle-class woman finds, after her experiences with men, that the soul does not exist, as only the body's existence can be proved by experiment; she grows restless all through the night; but the poet has only this to tell her, that the earth from the previous birth clings to the body in this life too like soil clinging to wet feet and what is important is to have a pure mind (A Middle-aged Woman from Middle Class). 'Spending the Entire Life in Hard Work' sums up a woman's pains-rather many women's pains- in a series of questions:

What must a woman be feeling

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About god
When bed-ridden at ninety
And having spent entire life in hard work?

What must a woman be feeling
about God
when everything was tidy
and at its appointed place
but got devastated
because she could not conceive a child?

What must a woman be feeling
About god
Dragging each day for her son
And living mutely
Swallowing the cruelty
Of a perverted husband?

What must a woman be feeling
About god
When awareness of being
a woman blooms
and she gets gloomy looking at the sky?

There is a philosophical vein in most of Chandrakant's poems as in 'A Dream Goes on Ripping' where one finds a woman climbing up a cliff to jump down at a critical hour in her life; but she is stuck in the air and only her shadow gets crushed under the train; the onlookers are confused whether it was the shade that died or the woman herself. Man is caught between illusion and reality and even death seems unreal. The poem 'What Does a Woman Need to Survive After All' begins with a commonplace question: "What does a woman need to survive after all/A husband, a child, own house/ A job, some money, a little love."; but gradually

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grows complex as the woman feels inside her an agony beyond articulation, life stings her like a scorpion and she fears her roof and walls are blowing away and doors and windows are melting allowing the winds from outside to come in. 'No House is as Sensible as Sorrow' is a moving piece where the woman's house is the house of loneliness full of anxieties, a grave full of the echoes of the drunken husband's abuses where pain becomes her colleague and she is surrounded by insurmountable walls within and without. He perceives woman's loneliness as complex yet sitting easy on her until a man penetrates that darkness ('A Woman's Loneliness Is') He also remembers a woman he considered his mother being devoured by the sea, bringing to ground his kite that was flying towards eternity. (The Woman I Considered My Mother). In another poem he says he and his partner should have quarrelled before their children and let out all the pains of their existence so that they learn not to suppress their sorrows in the name of politeness and come to terms with the sordid realities of life. (We Must Quarrel) The gradual loss of the intensity of love and romance in marriage, the hardening of the heart and the loss of light is the theme of 'I Recognized You First'that begins with the lines,

I recognized you first
During a heavy rain
I experienced your touch
One evening
Under the amazing dark
Under the banyan tree
I embraced you
In blood chilling cold
Accepted you
Under the blue fleshy light

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and ends menacingly with the lines,

Have I told you
That only recently a thorn
Is getting stuck inside me?

The poem, 'Which wave has Drifted Your Body' is a poem of gratitude to his partner who always stood by him, sought refuge in spirituality when sufferings washed ashore, tolerated him even when the emotions had run dry and endured every parting and every grief with grace and fortitude and became an inseparable part of his life. He compares a joint family to a huge banyan tree that gave him shade and gave him too an understanding of the complexity of relationships.

I flourished like a shrub
On a barren land
Unprotected unnoticed
Whatever dampness
I had in my lot
Amid the rush of brothers and sisters
I stored it inside me .

Again, in his encounters with women that enriched his notions of femininity and of being,

Every woman around me
Became Sujata
Every day like a full moon bloomed
Doors of knowledge half-opened
Windows of awareness half-closed
The moonlight that showered
Like revelation
Lightening up a little space

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Went behind clouds
The remaining eternity
Was dark as before
The remaining path
As amazingly onerous
As before.

He transcended physical contexts, denied his own instincts and went beyond appearances in order to gain insights into human life and woman's psyche. All his paths went crossing women and all his life was shaped by his encounters with women and in 'Conclusion' he says there is no alternative to destiny. Trees reappear in Chandrakant Patil's poems in many shapes and with many meanings. Now he feels trees are changing beyond recognition no more worried about giving shade to human beings.

Today
Trees are searching
for cosmos in emptiness
the frantic form of Shiva is entering
The interiors of trees

(Trees Are Not What They Used to Be)

Another recurring theme in Patil's poetry is poetry itself. In 'A Poet' he defines the mission of poetry in different ways and concludes,

A poem is a forest
In the brain of a poet
And in its fresh light he looks for
Dreams,
A spring,
And the lost man.

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Patil's 'Epilogue' to the poems on women is like an interview with himself and tries to sum up his views not only on women but on life and society. He views woman as the rhythm of creation and love as dissolution and self-forgetting. And about establishment he says,

What is establishment?
A meadow for the privileged.
Exploitation of the meek,
Protection for the inefficient
Behind the bulwark.

He says he cannot fight it himself as it will be like a single wave fighting a solid rock. It can be fought only collectively.

5

There is a tone of detachment that comes from uncertainty rather than renunciation in many of Chandrakant Patil's poems. This leads to a distancing of experience and a healthy refusal to assert anything. This can be seen even in his attitude to poetry:

Words did not find exact places
In the lines of a poem
Or did lines get bewildered
While searching for words?
Did I get entangled
In the net of words unawares?
Or did language drag itself
While living through bits?

(Detachment)

Living in many times
At the same moment
Living at many places
At the same time

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To become timeless
Getting entangled in many creatures
At the same time
And remaining free

(In Many Times at the Same Time)

However he is sure of one thing: 'a genuine poem has to brighten up a mysterious dark corner'. This is further explained in another poem: "If there are no questions/ Which don't strike the roots/ How can a poem get /A throbbing heart /and an agonized mind? /Only since recent times/ When all emptiness is felt /I feel free from within / Only since recent times/ The rock inside is getting exposed/Perhaps the roots of a possible love poem/ Must be in it!" (Could Not Write) Is-ness (being), emptiness (nothingness): these terms are repeated in Patil's poems many times showing his affinity to Buddhism, existentialism and Bhakti poetry all of which share these concerns and try to define them in different ways. He challenges the god Vithal and the saint-poet Tukaram to come to him to prove their existence or inspire an abhang from within him putting an end to the surging conflicts , the endless furore, within him. (Rowdiness) He also believes in the camaraderie of human beings and articulates it like the true botanist he really is: "Cells cannot survive/ Without each other/ Tissues and body parts/ Are not mutually complete/ Without each other/ How human beings cannot / Balance each other from within?" (Nature and Man) Again, Everyone wants a strong wall/ Between oneself and the others /Everyone wants to be double-faced/ like god Janus " and wonders, "Have I been wrong since the beginning? " (Partner) His faith in detachment and in movement is reasserted in lines like "What is adrift goes on becoming pure /It over-

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comes all barriers easily/ Dried leaves do not gather at its bottom/ whose transparent body automatically/ brightens in the sunlight". This is very close to the lines of the Kannada Shaivite poet, Basava who says in one of his vachanas , 'Standing things will fall / the moving will go on forever.' One must keep oneself adrift; who knows whether both shores of the river of life are the same?. He also wonders why those who once feared giving birth should fear death when they grow old (Fear) Only those that are useful to others will survive. When all the beautiful flowers disappear in autumn, only the unattractive leaves of the cedar tree are going to be useful as plates and bowls for the poor. (Frantic Dance) Man cuts down trees for his selfish ends, but one day the trees are sure to uproot the human race if development progress at this rate with little concern for the environment. (Sky-bound Roots)

That Patil's poetry can very ably handle protest and sarcasm is proved by poems like 'In the Night of Curfew' where roads become widows, terror is stuck on the air and the smell of oppression fills the atmosphere and the poet feels

Tomorrow
When the sun will rise in newspaper
The corpse of peace will be
Enclosed in every word
And a few white doves of peace
Will be flying gracefully
Throughout the city

The poet trust the black crows as they represent protest than the white doves of peace that often stand for meek submission to oppression. He ends the poem saying that 'Protest is a preface/ To the death of fear', a line that resounds with

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greater significance in our own dark times. At times the poet suffers from guilt, the secret guilt that he has another face hidden form the people:

My face
which you loved so intensely
has behind it yet another face
but divided and cracked

Did you never feel like
scratching the sophisticated surface
and looking inside at the dividing line
or did you never have breathing space for it?

6

The poems from *Apni Bhasha ke Sameep* translated by Vishnu Khare reveal the deep political consciousness of Chandrakant Patil. In 'Ahmedabad; 2003', a moving poem addressed to the Gujarati poet Adil Mansuri written in the wake of post-Godhra genocide in Guajarat, he asks Adil where he is now and how he could run away from a place he had so much loved and find shelter in a distant Arab world. He tells Mansuri how the tomb of the great Sufi poet Wali Dakhani has been vandalised and razed to the ground.

Do you still hold a brush in your hand?
Do fond words fluttering their mystic wings
Still descend on your canvas?
Does your conscience
Still darken
With sad ghazals?

(For Adil Mansuri)

In another poem he addresses another Gujarati poet, Mohammed Alvi who had once said that God is like a lantern

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thrown into the junk in the attic and has to be taken out and wiped clean for use until electricity is restored. That was written a quarter-century ago, and now God is no more a lantern but a torch that sets fire to homes and burn to death even human beings:

Meanwhile how fast everything has changed
God is no more a silent lantern
He is now a blazing torch
That has extinguished the lamps of the entire city
In broad daylight

Jenab,
What are you writing these days?
I ask because
Time is bent upon murdering poetry
Yet human beings exist, living has to be done,
And so does creation.

(For Jenab Mohammed Alvi)

Then he comes to Wali Dakhani himself who had been inspired by the birds, gardens, mountains and forests of Aurangabad centuries ago. He wonders whether it is the same city as it has now become a city of murderers and arsonists. The poet remembers how Wali had to leave Delhi when a crazy king had taken over and seek refuge in this city and how he with his friends used to sit here, in the graveyard of Siraj Aurangabadi, under a neem tree with its trembling leaves playing with moonlight and discuss poetry with his young companions.

Passing by the graveyard
I would often wonder
How did you transform

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your life's humdrum routine, Wali,
Into your ghazals and maznavis?
How was your evergreen language born
Amid universal decline?

(Safe in a Dirge: Wali Dakhanai, Aurangabad, 1986)

He has drunk the honey and hemlock of this city, wandered through its arteries, fearlessly roamed its streets, knowing by heart every nook and corner, every house and gali. He knew its stones and magical canals, walls and scented gardens, like his own breath. Now the city has grown dark and its people divided on the basis of religion. And it makes him wonder,

Mohammed Wali,
Were you living in the present
You would perhaps have imprisoned yourself
in some dark lane
Spat on civilisation and sat down
Before a carom-board in a decrepit tea-house
Or gambled
on a raised platform in the lane
Or got caught
touting black-market cinema-tickets
Or robbing people on the desolate highway,
Or maybe as a boy you would have become a garage-hand
Mastering the esoteric language
of nuts and spanners and screwdrivers
Might have got a driving licence
from somebody benevolent for
An auto-rickshaw, a taxi or straightaway of a truck

(Ibid)

This city is now neither the poet's nor Wali's; the people have forgotten his name and they even want to change the

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name of the city forgetting the history of six hundred years. The poet concludes the heart-wrenching poem confessing that he never knew what a dirge was until now, but knows now that Wali's name can remain safe only inside a dirge.

Patil is fond of the question-answer form in poetry and especially when he has to speak of larger things he falls back on this form:

What is Cosmos?
The incomplete dream of Time.
What is Time?
A ceaseless hidden stream.
What is history?
A broken scene made up of fragments of time.
What is creativity?
The art of life formed by imagination.

(Cosmos)

In 'Not for Me' he says he does not want an alphabet that has lost its shape and shrivelled, not a language untouched by the moisture of experience, not a dark poetry that has extinguished the enveloping light. Some of Patil's poems have a touch of magic like 'Three Men' where a man who died in a dream, a wrestler with words whose language was like stuffed birds go to Mahim. The third was himself and he would not deny that as the people wish him not to. In 'O God' the poet tries different definitions of God, as the cream of culture boiled n history's cauldron, the blackened glass of the lantern, a seed desperate to sprout beneath the poet's sceptical spoil, the creator of infinite voids, the formlessness of the poet's intellect that has little option..

Are you timeless
Or the vitality of the Stone Age?

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Are you an ancient
Or a contemporary pathos?
Are you the same
who is idly dangling his feet
in the current of the present
Or
You do not exist
And only your shadow
floats on the water

The sceptic tries to kill God with the weapons of reason and unreason, with chisels and questions, because if God exists, his life has no meaning and if he is the ultimate truth, God must by a myth. The poet however invites God to come to him even if he does not exist. One wheel of his chariot is sinking in the mud of suffering and the other is suspended in the air. He requests God to push him deep into the terrible abyss of faith. The poem brings many memories to a careful reader's mind: the Indonesian poet Chairil Anwar's poem' In the Mosque' where he is wrestling with God, Soren Kierkegaard's concept of the 'leap of faith' where the philosopher asserts that God cannot be found by reason but only through a blind leap towards faith, Tukaram's moments of dark doubt when he is disappointed at God who does not offer him even a fleeting vision. 'Suddenly in the Midnight' is a surreal poem where the city turns into a nightmare as electricity fails, roads look like skeletons, buildings turn into man-eaters and the whole city looks like a disordered constellation. 'Notes on Water' is like an ode to water that can make and unmake lives and civilizations, that carries many myths and memories around water from diverse religions, texts and traditions, from the Vedas to the Bible, from Mahabharata to Quran. The poem is made up of the contrary nature of water

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as a creator and destroyer: "Water awakens the dreams/ of a new creation /sleeping under the land/ When it plunders/ it cross examines /the bushes and the trees." 'Three Wandering Poets' is again a dreamy poem of metamorphoses ending in irony:

Birds are unaware
that the three poets are taking rounds
in the high class street of the metropolis
And the poems are sleeping
in the elite hall.

'A Little Time-space' returns to the meditative mood of many earlier poems. Loneliness is compared to a dagger that sinks deeper and deeper into the flesh, making the poet ask all kinds of questions about identity, existence, love, poetry, relationships and death, to find ultimately that some space-time is still left for poetry. The fear of solitary encounters with oneself haunts the poet in 'Missing'. It is as if the Djinn from the lamp is left outside and Aladdin has gone missing. In another poem, the sun seems to understand the pain of both the dreams, of the patient villager and the eyes of the night (Both the Pains) Then poet's father returns in the poem 'Father'. After many years of his death he reappears with the cosmic energy of the universe. He had passed through a turbulent time and many things have happened after his parting too: wars, disasters, achievements, Hiroshima, man's voyage to the moon, the destruction of villages, the growth of fear in every heart...But father was not interested in the great events of his time or in the mystery that shrouded his life. He was like the sky, beyond clouds and nights, and yet so close to oneself. In 'Night' one finds some whispering to one another as to how the dim light can be turned into a brighter light while some want to discover through dreams whether they

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were dreaming or waking. In 'Secret' the poet smells death in the odour that comes from the hospital and wonders what to do with that secret.

Patil's Mahatma poems with which this book closes are dirges for our dark times. He recalls how as a small child in a garden in Hyderabad he had heard the news of Gandhi's death. He did not know who had died and why there were such large sobbing crowds and why his own father was sobbing too and his hold on his hand was growing tighter. Now after many years when violence is blooming on every creeper he wonders, 'Bapu, is this the country that is really yours?' (Mahatma I) The second poem in the series with his successful and unsuccessful attempts to visit Gandhi's Samadhi at Rajghat. First he has a fleeting glimpse and later he spends some time in meditation there and feels the presence of the Mahatma and understands the compassion that drove his tragic life. In the third poem he visits Gandhi's place in Johannesburg and marvels at the growth of this honest and transparent man from a fighter against colour prejudice into a Mahatma. He is inspired to write a poem, but he finds his pen, wallet and everything he had had been snatched 'non-violently' by some wandering young men and begins to wonder whether he was in India or South Africa.

Even these uneven translations of an important Indian poet of our time give us a glimpse of his poetic world in all its range and variety, its scintillating imagery and its meditative profundity. I feel truly honoured to have been invited to write this introduction to the first comprehensive collection of Chandrakant Patil's poems in English translation.

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A) Poems from
Apani Bhasha Ke Sameep

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1

Safe in a Dirge: Wali Dakhni,

Is this the same as your city
Mohammad Wali
The same gardens and birds
Canals tanks mountains forests
That awoke in you
The feelings of a poet?

Is this the city where you were born
And after your death
Did your body
Mingle in the dust of this city?

Mohammad Wali,
At the age you arrived in this land
Leaving Delhi because of a crazed king
The first time with your father
The Bandanawaz Baba Gesudaraz,
At nearly the same age
Did I arrive in this city of yours,
Half-a-century is about to expire

I have made your city my own
And filled it with my breath.
Under the hovering shadow of death
In every lost battle
This city has given me refuge.

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Buried under the debris of defeat
I have managed to claw my way out.
After these many years
This city of yours
Cannot be wrenched away from my body and soul.

In my youth
A strange madness would possess me
And with my friends at midnight
I would reach the graveyard
Where before the grave of Siraj
We would sit under the neem tree.
Looking at the trembling leaves
Playing with moonlight
We would be immersed in our own solitude.

Passing by the graveyard
I would often wonder
How did you transform your life's humdrum routine, Wali,
Into your ghazals and mathnavis?
How was your evergreen language born
Amid universal decline?

I don't know
In which city
My last day, my last evening
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My last night of eternal sleep be spent.
But I shall remember this city of yours
Even after my death.

Mohammad Wali,
Ever since I have come to my senses
I have drunk the honey and hemlock
Of this your city.
I have wandered through the arteries of this city
In resignation.
I have passed through all localities and lanes
Every quarter, each open space of this city
Without fear or worry.
I have known each house and each wall, each stone
The magical canals, open gardens
Like my own breath.
Have known
The sunshine shying away from
The narrow bylanes of this city.
I recognised how deep the dark was in every quarter.

Mohammad Wali,
Having spent my entire life in this city of yours
I have seen
How the winds of language
Inflame the shoals of religion,

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How people arrive from alien lands
And terrorised by tongue
Divide the city
Into religious camps.

Mohammad Wali,
The terrifying Satan of communalism
Grows each day now in this city,
Its canals are poisoned with
The potion of racial hatred.
Carnivorous plants breed in its climate.
Man-eating beasts emerge from its lanes
In broad daylight.
Terrorised darkness
Descends on your city with regular monotony.

Yet this city
Grows incessantly like a nail.
As the two banks of a river

Run away from the midstream
Terrorised by a deluge
So are the borderlines
Running away from your city.

Look, how immersed in peace this city of yours
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Changes into a metropolis.
How the crowd has pasted up its mask
On its body.
How people who belong here are turning strangers
In their own land.

Mohammad Wali,
Were you living in the present
You would perhaps have imprisoned yourself in some dark lane
Spat on civilisation and sat down
Before a carrom-board in a decrepit tea-house
Or gambled on a raised platform in the lane
Or got caught
Touting black-market cinema-tickets,
Or robbing people on the desolate highway,
Or maybe as a boy
you would have become a garage-hand
Mastering the esoteric language
of nuts and spanners and screwdrivers.
Might have got a driving licence from somebody benevolent
for An auto-rickshaw, a taxi or straightaway of a truck;
Whenever the call of Jihad
Would come riding high on a whirlwind
Your eyes too would be sanguine
Sharpening rusted knives, daggers, spears.

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Mohammad Wali,
This city cannot be yours now.
The people of the city have forgotten your name
And wish to forget even the city's name
Which they claim hurts who they are
And so should be changed.

Mohammad Wali,
This is no longer my city either
Carrying a history of six hundred years
I am collapsing within
Searching for my city lost in this metropolis.

Mohammad Wali,
The words I played with my entire life
Do not know what a dirge is.
But it is true
That the name of your beloved city can now
Remain safe only in a dirge.

(*Translated from Hindi by Vishnu Khare*)

(*Wali Daccani, a contemporary of Siraj Aurangabadi, was a great Urdu poet also known as Wali Aurangabadi or Wali Gujrathi, Born in Aurangabad (Maharashtra) in 1667 and died in Ahmedabad probably in 1707. He was remembered widely after the vandalization of his grave in anti-Muslim riots of 2002.*)

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2

For Adil Mansuri

Adilji, where are you?
Are you well?
Your heart dancing on many-hued waves
Your mind jostling with words
And your bold protests--
Is your world
As unbroken as it used to be?

How easily you bade farewell
To your city
And went away to a deceitful world
Beyond the seven seas.
A Sufi poet likewise arrived in your city
From my village
And made his peace with the Almighty
Nearly three centuries ago.

Adilji,
I am talking of Wali Dakhani
Whose grave has been razed to dust
By devils in the armour of power.
You know that, don't you?

Do you still hold a brush in your hand?
Do fond words fluttering their mystic wings
Still descend on your canvas?

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Does your conscience
Still darken
With sad ghazals?

Or, abandoning all deep memories
On the shores of the Arab Sea,
Have you got lost
In a heaven
Where all messengers of God
turn into strange passengers?

(*Translated from Hindi by Vishnu Khare*)

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3

For Janab Mohammad Alvi

Janab Alvi Saheb,
You once said
God is like a lantern thrown into the attic of junk
When there is an outage.
This remark of yours comes to mind.
Then the lantern is searched for, dusted and
Wiped clean and lit
Till electricity is restored.

Janab Alvi Saheb
This happened probably twenty or twenty-five years ago.
Meanwhile how fast everything has changed.
God is no more a silent lantern.
He is now a blazing torch
That has extinguished the lamps of the entire city
In broad daylight.

Janab,
What are you writing these days?
I ask because
Time is bent upon murdering poetry.
Yet human beings exist, living has to be done,
And so does creation.

(*Translated from Hindi by Vishnu Khare*)

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4
Cosmos

What is Cosmos?
The incomplete dream of Time.

What is Time?
A ceaseless hidden stream.

What is history?
A broken scene made up of fragments of time.

What is creativity?
The art of life formed by imagination.

This living is the
Homogeneous form of the real and the imagined
Will it get
The support of Cosmos?

(*Translated from Hindi by Vishnu Khare*)

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5
In the Night of the Curfew

O innocent branches
Roads have become widows this night
And have driven away sounds out of limits.
A little terror is stuck in the pure air
You are looking for
And there is the smell of oppression.

Tomorrow
When the sun will rise, in the newspaper
The corpse of peace will be
Enclosed in every word.
And a few white doves of peace
Will be flying gracefully
Throughout the city.

White is such a colour
That hides all other colours in it
Especially the one
Whose splashes have not yet dried
On roads or in minds.
O innocent branches!
The crows which will perch on you

Tomorrow morning,
Believe them more than the doves.
They are living with the deep colour of protest
All over their bodies.
Protest is a preface
To the death of fear.

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6

Three Wandering Poets

(*For Akshay Upadhyaya and Prabhat Tripathi*)

Birds are unaware
that the three poets are wandering
in the elite street of the metropolis
through the soundless heart of the night
tottering in their intoxication.

Blasting up the academic bubbles
of the imprisonment of poetry
of the liberation of poetry
of the return of poetry
three poets have come out to the street.

All the three have been lost
in the poetry of the Stone Age.
The bundle of time
attached to hang from the banyan tree
and everything is so silent
that there is no answer
to the poet or the poem.

The street is in mourning for the wind.
All homes are restless due to solitude.
And inside
the brave crickets of the clock
are fighting like warriors with time.
Everything has stopped;

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only three innocent poets are wandering
in the desolate street of the metropolis.
Looking for the three souls
untimely separated from the bodies

in the graveyard silence of the night
becoming the wings of birds
leaves of trees are sleeping.
Becoming the small fish
water in the lake is sleeping.
Becoming the humans
all the houses are sleeping.
No movement, no sound.

Even those
who are supposed to remain vigilant
sleep carelessly.
Then only a poet keeps vigilance.
And now the three poets are surprisingly awake
intoxicated
wandering for the whole night
in the cultured street of the metropolis.

To cross the gigantic river
of terror- struck time,
raising the bridge of their narrow life

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poets are standing.
And flowing from under it
the midnight, the silent street
the huge bark of a fallen banyan tree
the lake, the small fish and the elite metropolis

Birds are unaware
that the three poets are taking rounds
in the elite street of the metropolis,
and the poems are sleeping
in the elite hall.

(*Translated from Hindi by Dileep V. Chavan*)

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7
A Little Time-space

Loneliness
is an invisible dagger
that keeps cutting deeper and deeper inside.

Then
I search the meaning
of my existence;
the meaning
of every action
in relation to all the living beings;
meaninglessness of the death
burning in the cold
calamity of a poem;
immoral behavior
deep love for everything;
The wearing out of shoes
due to constantly kissing the earth;
all barren rifts
boredom to the core
the chaotic life.

I slip off slowly and gradually
into the bottomless mysterious valley
closer to death.

Even now
a little time-space has remained
for a meaningful poem!

(*Translated from Hindi by Dileep V. Chavan*)

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8
Missing

Plucking out the pricking experiences
from inside
and throwing them out.
Hiding the personality
into poems
by breaking away from the surrounding
or going beyond it.

How terrible it is
to have this kind of encounter with oneself!
To flow away
or to shatter into pieces.

Unconditionally
I wish to return
to that primitive darkness
from where I came.

It is impossible
that keeping the Satan outside
Aladdin of the lantern
has gone missing.

(*Translated from Hindi by Dileep V. Chavan*)

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9
Pain of the Two

When the night sleeps
and a dream wakes up
in her dark eyes,
at that very moment
several dogs begin to bark
together.

Like a considerate villager
night remains indifferent.
Just turns to the other side
and wants to spread
the sound of the barking
into the dreams.

The sun understands
the pain
of the two:
The dream
lying in the patience of the villager
and in the eyes of the night.
But
there is a lot of time
for him to rise.

(*Translated from Hindi by Dileep V. Chavan*)

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10

Father

Sprouting out of the navel of the night
a thousand petaled lotus of terror
has bloomed
in the darkness.
Streaming out of an invisible point
and spreading the arms,
an infinite zero
is swallowing the earth.

Father's body,
slipped off
from the dark rocks of death
into the mysterious room of the hospital.
Strange smells have enlivened
the atmosphere inside.
A drop of saline
contains the entire cosmos.
Father's soul is returning
to the mortal body
from the cosmos.

In a body,
a sensation
of a slow movement of silence.

Time and space of almost a century
is sleeping within Father's body.
Eighty-two years were chaotic
outside as well as inside.

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Two World Wars
with the impending danger of the Third.
One by one the Third World countries
became free.
A man injured in Hiroshima
reached the moon.
The earth became old
due to the explosion of population.
Rivers gone dry,
jungles have been cut down
human habitat became barren.
The relationship of the people
with each other,
relationship of the nature
with the world
completely changed.
The world
became a global village.

Slowly and gradually,
the villages
in which the soul of the country
was breathing,
got destroyed.
Father knows all these things,
but he kept them
only at the level of information.
He was not interested
in any mystery,

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not even in demystifying
the universe
god
life
death.

In the hospital,
dusky clouds of the past
land untimely
on Father's weak eyes.
Sometimes,
Father gets lost in himself.
Sometimes,
appears
the bottle of a saline in his eyes.

Whenever
I peeped into Father's eyes,
I realised that
Father's existence was like the sky.
beyond the cloud,
beyond the light,
yet
so close
and remains one's own.

(*Translated from Hindi by Dileep V. Chavan*)

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11

Night

Half of the night has passed by now
and the dim light
is suppressed under the darkness
on the desolate roadside.

Some of the people,
are awake
and thinking,
whispering in a very low voice
that how this dim light
should be transformed into a bright light.

Some people
are sleeping
and aspire
to discover in their dreams
whether they are really sleeping
or awake!

(*Translated from Hindi by Dileep V. Chavan*)

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12

Secret

Perhaps,
It is the thirteenth day.
Neither have I seen the open sky
Nor smelt the fragrance of the air.

Wounded,
I am watching from this bed.
Sometimes,
a dusky piece of the sky
which keeps hanging
like a half-dead saline bottle,
peeps through this window.

A strange smell of the hospital
runs through my veins
even though I lie at my home.

I have smelt death
through the smell
floating in the air around me.
Now,
what should I do with this secret?

(*Translated from Hindi by Dileep V. Chavan*)

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B)
Poems from
Nissandarbh
(Without Context)

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13
Three Men

Three men went reeling on their way to Mahim
One of them seemed to me like a man
Who had died in his dream
Meaning I saw his dream which was his
Or one might say that for the duration of the dream
I became him .
The second of them had wrestled with words all day
For umpteen days he wrestled the same way on the road
So why should we throw at him the questioning noose?
So paying no attention we went forward
As more than him, his exhibitionist words
And all the words of the world
Appear like sawdust-stuffed birds in the museum.

Three men went reeling on the street
One of them was I myself so they said
So why should I deny and deny what!

(*Translated from Marathi by Vishnu Khare*)

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14
Stuck up in the Window

At this odd hour
summer stuck up tightly in the window
or in my eyes.
Outside, orphan desolation expanding
on the flown away wide moor.
Melancholic sunlight
rare wounds afflicted by shadows
on the sunlight.
Unrestrained lonely path
getting lost in the clear horizon and
amid rows of trees at the roadside.
Delicate line blazes through garish flowers.
The fiercely blazing sunlight
stuck up tightly in the window.

Stranded walls of the stiffened houses
like the lines in the painting of the wall.
But the wind sometimes blowing outside
is like illusory shaking lines
of a classic painting.
Suddenly with the shrill cry
of a parrot that has scratched
the colour of a tree and flown away,
the glass of solitude is broken.
The solitude... then landing inside the house,
in the wind and even inside me,
intolerable moment;
helpless mind;

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and yet summer evening intoxicates;
for no reason eyes get brimmed,
become empty,
there is at least one memory, in every tear,
filled up delicately with her lips, in the eyes....
How to gauge her more snow-white, immaculate mind
innocent as water,
lips redder than the petals of Palash,
heart loftier than the Pine
here and there...
Imprisoned, unrestrained moment
through the body....
There, the ruthless solitude of summer
Sprawling over everything!

Only solitude ....
In front, rubbish poems of friends,
of the contemporaries, unknown poets, or even mine,
devastated, treacherous alliterations
of my own dead moments
the death of many feelings by myself....
Just the solitude... the sky directionless like me,
the space absolute.
Not a single cloud, with dampness in it
nothing is visible to the eyes through the window.
My own vision is flying away
in the vast emptiness
like the sunlight sunk
in the arid river-bed of Bindusara.

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15

The Song of an Orphan

When my father left
I was directionless like a wretched, comet.
He gave us birth: an atonement of his accident.
He had seen many cycles of such accidents.
He was a vagabond
with a begging bowl in his hands.
He did not break till his death
or even afterwards.
But did bend before every fresh and dry wind
politely, wretchedly
habitually.
No one waited till
he ceased.
Even the shadow refused
Comradere after getting bored.

I went on skidding on his path
flat, automatically.
The begging bowl came to my lot
as a matter of patrimony
and his ragged coat
hurled during many winters
was bitten and torn by a dog.
That was all he possessed.
In addition, there were tears
which were not taken by anyone.

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The flames of his pyre were blazing
within me and dispersed
all over the sky.
With my lips drowned in a handful of liquor
Happily jingling copper coins in my hands,
Singing songs I wandered with naked feet
like a wayward wind
whirling without any direction.

How can I say
I don't have even a single memory of his
while suffering the results of his fate,
this jumble of lines on my palm
and these submissive adventures in his activities?

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16

All These Days

Too much dust in the house
and cigarette butts scattered
all over.
Nothing to drink,
just empty bottles
and the terrible stomachache
too much absurd.
The floor has drunk the spilled medicine
early in the morning in the grip of a nighmare
in the clutches of peptic ulcer.

I remember truly and entirely
stopping and raising
the familiar and old wound
bleeding copiously on the road
in the evening.

Just then moving along the backbone
circumventing the left side of the waist
then over the stomach, on the edge of the left rib
a bug was drinking me.
I said okay, keep it up.

It so happens that my destruction
comes from limbs, from mouth,
from the pocket.

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It enters the head.
Deviant stars have spilled an amazing storm,
A sadistic flower is blooming from within
The mind is getting disabled.
All these days
I thought of death as my soulmate
But it left my home to stay with my neighbour.

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17

From the Isolation Ward

Nights become dry at night
moons suddenly turn yellow
flowers too get yellow
God of Hepatitis sends virus
on the yellow morning.
Crowds of bums
in the isolation ward number six of the hospital.

Light trembles in the courtyard of the hospital.
Trees in coma,
shed leaves or tears.
Sparrows cling to the roof
or against each other.
Yellowness catches eyes firmly.
Lying quietly on the white bed
you can listen to the inner music
of disintegrating liver cells
Jazz or Rhombasomba of viruses
hands in tremors
wise companionship of serum bilirubin.

Moments do not stick to the eyes;
Many evenings float over the hospital.

Spreading infinitely
dejected yellowness
with a whirling fate a woman defies

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all limitations of modesty,
Bridging up an obscure house
using the name of Hippocrates.
Blood relations keep expanding
Do not stay with the undesired bodies.
Desired bodies live thousands of miles away;
blood dries abruptly at some moment
Loving minds lend compassion.
Support for mind searched hopefully;
that it would be found is never expected.

Where should everyone stay?
All the paths are blocked.
If new ones are trodden
The people behind clasp round the neck.
With the miracle of God
the old people sprout
in front of every door.
God grafts thoughtless eccentricity
on their brains.
The old earn interest from daughters-in-law
on the capital of their sons.

They play intricate moves
difficult than the chess
defeating everyone.

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What a moment! What a guess! What a pursuit!
Life is quietly closed in the room of a hospital.
Nothing before, nor afterwards.
The layers of the past
surface in the brain.
Something shuffles, shines
and then disappears.
Something heaves in the chest;
The mind becomes plaintive or burns.
Rushing storms are directionless.
Stunned emptiness again
flaring up from all sides.

After burying umbilical cords,
they feed existence
with functions and festivals.
They impose life--
all turns are unfamiliar
so are all paths.
How terrible you cannot die there itself;
or the doors of wombs are closed
for you to return.

Mosaic life takes shape
from broken pieces
and moves.

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All colours get mixed up or get loose,
fade or become colourless.

Cannot understand a thing.
Cannot escape loneliness amidst a crowd.
Accept everything.
Go on humming a boring tune
with the same rhythm.
Morality burns at the end of a cigar.
The moral sky rips from all sides.
The detached inquiry of some girl
drags in some immoral snare.
Cannot find a pure piece of land
where you can keep your foot.
The sensitive skin is cauterized
with the ill-famed seal.

Can't do anything
not getting mobilized.
Comradeship is not lasting.
Lighthouses shake in the ebb of prestige,
shores look orphan.
Everyone counts dignity and honour.
Lives are spent
in scaling and calculations.
A dead bird is enticed,
cages of bones keep swinging.

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One of the shadows dallies with you.
No escape from life
no resurrection.
We begin to love suffering.
A narcissus blooms in a closed cocoon.
Nights have no shelter
and days are unreliable.
Nothing is with you.
Even a house like a mother
who remained far away....
That too dies.

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18

Without Any Context

For a sterile tree
trying to blossom earnestly
I gave, unawares,
a bite of midnight
and returned like a crazy bird
In the devastated sky.
I never turned back to look.
Earlier days have become mossy stones.
Years in between have frozen.
Drew lines on the nights
Set things ablzed in full senses
Unasked, lost in thoughts
Lingering in a crowd
Fate moved me like a pawn
Those who cheated went berserk
with the wind, becoming flowers.
To whom never wished to cheat--
Became stones,
Yet the transition of chaos
at the core.

In the closed directions of pretexts
trees, birds and flowers will come intermittantly
exchanging days and nights.
After death
loneliness will pass through
the transparent mind,
and a sterile stone will bloom on a tomb
without any context.

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C)
Poems from
Itthambhoot
(Integritas)

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19
"Sympathy"

The eleventh direction of the mind
remaining after occupying
all the ten directions
in a mystical hymn
is shattered...
That moment is stuck up
as it keeps spinning--

Wrapping around the body
the ripped rags of reality
scratched by oncoming dreams.

The rags of omnipresent continuity
scattered chaotically.

On the blurred limits
of desire and non-desire
the suddenly collapsed body.

The heedless penetration
given to the controller
by the uncontrolled
and the whirlwind
erupted in the brain.

The gigantic steel doors of eyelashes
are not opening.

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Tremors of fingers do not stop.

Slow movements of hands and feet
like an astronaut descending
on the moon,
the struggle of density with gravity.

The struggle of the presumed soul
Since time immemorial
eternal, unmanifest, indestructible.
And existence:
Explosion of shattered brain cells
while going through
the inner sphere of schizophrenia
getting disintegrated.
Coming slowly down,
life settling at the bottom of death,
getting shattered.

Future....
faceless people of flesh and blood
making erratic movements.
Telling their relationship
whose blood is turned to ice
throughout the body
and no one can understand
its pain.

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No one can see the clamour
in the heart.
No one is getting burned by
the wood-fire deep within.

Butterflies flown away
from the large eyeball
lost in the vast emptiness
of the sky,
and all the familiar signs
are melted.

Mind dead after drowning
in the dark
is suddenly bloated
and starts floating
on the darkness.

This darkness is not homogenous;
Nor is it silky, thin or netted.
Nor is it darkness like soft peacock plume;

It is not space drowning
in the eyes.
Nor is it
darkness deeply pierced in the heart
sprawled to the limits.

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The vast desert of darkness
stuck up and spread out
through the parts of the body,
in the stark open eyes and stormy brain.

No one is able to hold
the dreamless words
falling from the lips;
nor do they fit in the fists.
Who is the sad bird broken from space?
What for?
Terrible explosion for the motionless rabbit
Lying dead on the moon.

A huge, splintered rock
landed on the wise grass
and unrestrained dash of the sea
trapped in the chest,
uncontrollable paroxysm
of the mosaic mind.

Raising innumerable stunted hands with spikes
cactus demanding water.
Multiple shades of nonexistence have
companionship with illusion.
And amid disrupted waves
on the mirage,

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what is happening?
Why is sensation disintegrating
amid intoxication?

The vast bangle of time
whirling
suddenly snapped
and its shards became
a terrible kaleidoscope.
Who is turning it round?

Voyage in a submarine of opium intoxication
in the clear and deep waters
of the human sea.
Conches of dreams, shells of illusions,
moss of hallucination
trembling corals of libido,
hordes of starfish
speedy colours surging up.
The fear has borrowed
the body of the octopus
hidden behind the rock--
the sea is the god of love.

Each person
an exiled rainbow of libido,
fossilized life.

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and preserved in the inner sanctum
is perpetual inferiority complex.

Who has got involved
in this globe of death?
Who has made to ride
this vehicle?
Who is compelling to walk
on this belt of tortures?
The incomplete distance
in between the belts
balancing life,
the estranged audience
watching from a distance,
the clamour of clapping
sliding over the body.

The mountain of forgetfulness
sprouted on the place
where memories stung.
In its dense valleys
the wild growth of disjointed forests
cruel deceptions
on slippery paths
surrounding all sides--
body: a hypnotic flower of exhaustion.

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Hanging in this amazing empty sky
an interpolated question mark,
dark chandelier of existence
shattered by clouds.
Why?
What for?

Faded limits of twilight
of deep sleep
while the full image of the sun
surges up --
Lines reverberated in life:

Life is a clamour,
a fire of joy and torture,
a line of non-existence
without any context.

Life is a shadow of delusion
a prey in the flow of time,
an alchemy of non-existence
without any context.

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20
Introduction to the Essay on Rosy

I saw her for the first time
in the cave of glass, the cash counter
of a large store.
Sitting under the toy of a crib
she was ruminating, relaxed.

When her reverie was broken
by an "Excuse me,"
she peeped through
the large eyes of the cave,
folded the corners of her trained lips
plastered her smile with innocence
and spilling mischievousness
in her large eyes
she said leaning on the glass:
'just a minute please,'
she would be coming, etc.
Removing the rock of the cave
when she came out
I saw her entire torso
leaning towards obesity,
a dark cloud trapped
in the misty blue georgette.
And to reflect the glances piercing
the transparent walls of the cave,
a tight necklace around the neck.
Then making a film poster of me

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she hung it
in front of the cave
and rushed towards the stairs on the left
in search of "she would be."
Which means a huge ball of vinyl
rolled over the stairs tiptoeing
towards the bottom.

Adjusting my folded hands
I saw the stall of clothes
and tried to fit in
all the familiar bodies
in the readymade clothes
hung on the rope
and smeared on their faces
like an advertisement,
all the cosmetics in a distant stall.

Then
on the axis of the mind played
Long Play discs from the stall behind.
With that,
Momin's distressed lines
kept ringing through
the voice of Begum Akhtar
again and again.
Then stretching hands fully

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thrusingt them in the showcase of the radio
and turning the knob
on Karachi
there was precisely
the voice of Noorjahan
stuck up in the lines by Azmat.

And suddenly the virus of nostalgia
started piercing the chest;
so, swallowing quickly
two pills of reality,
returned to the body of the poster.
With that, an invisible power
which had lifted and brought her,
saw keenly a huge steel ball
over the stairs on the right in front;
the mischievous eyes were clearly
stuck up in the steel
and the slow movement of the novice lips.
O, she is coming....
The ostrich from "she is"
that had come later
blurted out the answer to my riddle:
Sir, my friend Miss Rosy...etc.
Then the invisible flowers of coral tree
remaining after occupying the entire mansion
were drooping innanely as a matter of habit;
and the fourth parameter of life
stuck up to the three dimensional Rosy
was lost in the glass cave.

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21

Itthambhut (Integritas)

I

Shrinking or with complete pervasion
in the mysterious shapelessness of the dark
while losing existence
and dissolving,
the metropolis, river, roads and houses
and the invisible perspective of nature
dripping over everything
and gathering at the bottom
while spreading through the organs
managing uncountable explosions
without context in the brain,
connecting the unusual balance
of time and space,
balancing the burden of empty sky on the mind,
provoking sensation with intoxicating
moderate liquor,
while gently descending on the blurred limit
the door of the thirty-fifth mysterious cave
opens suddenly
and the stalactite of inquiries
hang over the head:
who am I?

II

Sometimes
soundless screams of "Who am I"?

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rise without any echoes
in the womb
and slowly dissolve.
Continuous rhythm of heart beats
like deep silence in the sanctum
of a Shiva temple
swallows the fuming ringing of bells.
The temple of womb was
the very temple of Shiva;
saturated primal darkness brimmed in the interior
and the primal rhythm of the heart
shrouding for the entire life
armours for protection.

III

The dark in the womb
has universal innocence.
The fearless space there
has no dimension
and no context without umbilical cord.
There is only the foetus
growing with each phase.

In the empire of the dark womb
all powerful conquerers
and the rulers of the world.

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are defeated
The battle strategies
in the primal dark
cannot be penetrated
nor can the well-known triangle
of Freud, Marx and Darwin.

The womb has innate intoxication
of only being and of growth
in its self-sufficient empire.
The opium of religion
and marijuana of materialism
the cannabis of power
mescaline of castes
the *somrasa* of Vedic legacy
the LSD of absolute liberation
become spiritless
or everything becomes powerless...
The pure innocence hypnotizes the womb.

IV

The strong bastion collapses with birth,
the protective glass cracks abruptly.
There is epiphany in the very first ray
of a terrible rage of the world.
And the pedicel of the closed lotus,

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gets cut with the umbilical cord.
All the parameters get unfolded slowly
which are included in
Slowly and gradually
get folded all the parameters
of all-inclusive living.
The distance between birth and living
is only to the extent of the umbilical cord
or as much as the subconscious extending for miles.

A well-trained dog
that jumps through the ring of fire
does not fall in the dust.
It rather gets stuck up
in the ring of fire,
and celebrating that
the audience applauds.

Contexts of existence change with birth.
Flowers of feeling bloom in the very first season
whose stemans are to be fallen in the deathly dark.

V

Unavoidable naming only
after slipping in the flow of time
and its endless echoes inside;

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curiosity surges up inside,
gigantic cliffs of questions collapse
in the mind;
incomprehensible shape, exciting colours,
the still density,
dismantled in the mind
the vision gets stuck up
at the toy on the crib
or the rectangular window in the sky;
the warmth of blood is felt within,
the habitual sensation of a disciplined flow;
habitually the thumping nerves are felt;
the density in the brain, stiffness of muscles,
scream of eyelashes,
the clock in the heart
that has lost its arms,
The is-ness of pains, blooms
deep within habitually.

VI

Innumerable cyclones roar within
in whose breath the daily rituals are enclosed
imbalancing the struggle outside.

Conditioning has fierce nails;
like the beasts,
it scratches eyes, ears, tongues, noses and skin.

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Wounds raise stones of marks in the netherworld of the mind.
Sometimes the land inside rips,
suddenly erupts the boiling lava
keeping embers on the wounds
sowing enticing fire-seeds of revolt.

Fierce nails pluck pristine, delicate leaves
in whose arteries slowly flow innocence.
In their noose necks automatically get tricked
and the free orchards of the body
blooming with sensation.

VII

The warmth of sunrays
seen through the prism filtered in cups of hands
through the cracked magnifying glass;
the rainbow-coloured edges of the entire world
seen through the piece of sooty glass
the solar eclipse
the red burning balls
straining the eyes,
wane moon, skeletal moonlight
through the bright red flowers of *Palash*
peacock flower, hibiscus, wings of *Gulmohor*.
Flaring up of the sun

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shining fish of drops.
The highborn moss in the transparent water
expert slices formed over water.
The challenge of erect trees,
the garrulous wind.
Grass will unexpectedly alert butterflies.
A sparrow balancing herself in mid-air
looks steady--
wretched loneliness
in the afternoon stifled in feathers.
The terrible baobab tree in the evening
ghostly branches.
A strong, stony dark in the graveyard;
commotion of flames,
the compassionate rhymes of fox-yelling
coming from heath to mud roof;
the indivisible relationship of goddess and lapwing,
rhymes of owls,
raucous shouts
shapes and shapeless figures shooting up the shadows
faceless faces.

And bats hung upside down to the nerves
pulling back from any stop
the fluttering of their wings,
saturated fluttering at any point.

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VIII

The very first accident is carved
on the curtain in the brain.
Every cell is tingling
because of this sudden assault.
A cascade
on electrifying nerves
due to the sudden trembling;
frozen time gathered on
the peak of unconscious.
The rhyme of death
balancing life,
dripped blood colour
on the clear crystals,
gluing the plumes of feathers
out of fear
the prickly porcupine
is vigilant,
with stiff eyelashes
on the air of cactus.

Everybody's death, one by one,
is stirred up from the roots.
It pushes the super sensuous
in the ocean of pain.
Every bottom is swirling,
but the stint of death during public violence

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does not arouse any inner agitation.

The intrinsic compassion does not flourish;
the garish phase of beauty
continues at the public level.

After the first accident,
after the passing of so many seasons
now the essence illumines the implied meaning,
that every riot
is a public jungle of men
which burns with hatred.
It is a dried flower of caste and religion
on the tomb of reasoning.

IX

Prior to the context of relationship
between sky and history was revealed,
each piece internally transmitted deeply.
The sun, mountain, river, dark, clamour of Omkar
illusive soil, transparent water, shapes of sunlight
desolate nature, innocent greenness, healthy evening
the passionless wind nipping flowers
passionless clouds
joy, delight, cheerfullness, illusion, gloom.

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Young birds from obscurity
with feathers of creativity
floating and descending on lines;
from the first stuck up symbols
the warm flow of their blood
and throbbing heart sensed
through every word,
falling to pieces of time
recovered in the very first creation;
falling to pieces of the condition-establishing place
in the collapsing eyes,
the self-existent moment
settled in the very first creation,
communication dissolved in silence
and annoyance of is-ness trickled
knowingly or unknowingly.

X

Clean and clear sky after the rain
of the first few clouds of creativity,
and in the romantic surrounding
and spontaneously growing weed of poems
habitual deception of the habitual path
Exhausting whirlpool
in the murky flow.
Agony of separation

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sorrows hatched on a summer evening,
the beloved getting flared up by the disc of moon
wrapping shadows
barren organization,
imported experience,
unnecessary ornamentation.
Pseudo existence
gushing self-entertaining ego,
lines after lines on a clean page,
clean structure.

And internal duel forcing
a dance on innate rhythm,
an individual and the entire multitude
and social villages and metropolis,
economic imbalance,
social stratification,
meaningless investigation,
life, long like a desert,
unbearable loneliness,
alienated from the surroundings and values,
alienated from every moment.

A poem is life.
A poem is confession,
A poem is penance.

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A poem is a glass of water slipped out of hands,
a poem is an identity.

XI

Dream and reality become a chisel
with its stroke crack
the hard heart of established rock,
enduring growth only on rock
and with growth become fossilized,
bits of beautifully coloured lichens spread all around.
All around their spores eager for beauty
get burned down--
that burning is of revolt.
Blinding romantic fog
is dissolved,
gigantic trees maintaining stiffness turn dry
getting garlanded by snobbish yellow leaves.

With unasked and unavoidable flames of revolt
many poets having come to the city for shelter
when rock starts cracking
start searching for nooks and corners,
turning nooks and corners into moats
beat drums of war out of subconscious fear.
Their rusted weapons tremble
with even a little sound

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and again get inactive
to have a new layer of rust.

Mining through the columns of newspaper
the defence squad becomes careless.
and cannot even blast the date
from the sheer routine life.

XII

When this was realized
those denying treading
on the corrupt path of this market
refuse the parasitic life of growing in literary cartons
and the daily garbage piled up on every page.

They tear off the masks,
of the hypocrites
decorated with pity,
kick out the pets flaunting the belts of royalty
and tie up in front of their shops,
whirling around themselves
showing the direction of trade winds
and throw out
the weather cock critics hung on their doors.

They tear off the mechanical parrots
who vent out voices for which they are trained,

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the coquettish mynas,
singing songs of highbrow families,
literary veterans sitting quietly on stools,
comic bears making you laugh by tickling,
hyenas longing for prestige,
literary flamingos
angry and rebellious chameleons
who change their colours.
The vast and stretched net of culture
renders safety to all hypocrites
while collapsing from the swing of prestige.

XIII

A terribly ugly lady called culture
wandering invisible on the roads of a metropolis,
the black soot round of black money
on her forehead
wrapping arousing poster all over the body.
The other-worldly music rippling through the arteries
chanting of cheers
gambling for wow
protection of knives
murder for the sake of ablution.
Her emaciated fingers fondle
through experiments of underground reality
in the art galleries

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over Ravishanker's westernized sitar
over soft curtains
through skyscrapers,
through dreamlike reality of five-star hotels.

Victorious but corrupt vassal rulers
conciliatory to her
cannot destroy from ghettos
and brothels,
her illegitimate off spring growing freely.

XIV

I had discarded my Brahminism
when very young
and lifted my head after the rebel
from the cultural waste gathered over the community
along with a consecrated thread thrown in a gutter
and had started search for
equality among communities.

Coming back after finishing
my wanderings all these years
now I understand that
it was just a mythical flower of *gul bakavali*
safely placed in a distant palace
and all the routes to that place

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were lost
and the flower too had disappeared.

Now I understand that
communities are super ghosts
protecting the crown of the ruler
in the long and dark phase of the month
After the swearing-in ceremony.
roots and branches of banyan trees
in every village
tremble with their sport.
The entire land under the feet trembles;
roaring of tigers dissolve in throats;
the long hands of ghosts start
dancing before the eyes.
Then getting helpless, all friends and relatives
turn automatically to the consecrated thread
and start searching meaninglessly
the mysterious knot on the thread.

XV

I gathered different intellectuals
of my age
who had come out breaking the rings of caste.
We noticed that language
which easily blooms like breath
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becomes the first weapon of
the caste polarization,
honed on the wheel of corrupt politics.
We saw the pathetic disabled body of
the subconscious society
due to uncountable blood-sucking leeches.
For the sake of safety
in the uproar of power
the head armour of caste
worn by the conquerors
and the impenetrable armour of wealth
and leaders who blasted the gigantic bridge
amid socio-political polarization.

We had seen
the raised sharp paws of revolt
of a powerful pack of swooping panthers.
Red virus implanted in the pride
for contagion
and then the unfortunate disintegration.
Self-destructive frenzy; after that
red mirage revolting against the desert here
looking for absolute value in stone.
The illusive trap of the saffron
Intellectuals

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helpless and scizophrenic
shattered due to political systems
and depressing surrounding
polluted in all directions.

XVI

While taking your enthusiastic
tiptoeing child to the school
holding hands
You have to relive
the vanished, scary childhood
and unbearable blows
in the confines of the school.

Nothing changes even after
thirty-one years have elapsed
except pictures in the schoolbook
the walls, shattering dreams
remain as they are;
teachers who do their business
as a social prestige
are the same;
schools too are the same
which become barren forests
where curiosity uproots creepers of admiration

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and broad-leaved plants of imagination;
the lotus of ideas wilt in the bud.

The sawdust of corruption
filled up in mind;
all social and education institutions
subtract the sawdust in mind.
Trying to vent out vigour
veteran educationists
want lifelong prestige.
The mildew of highbrow values
automatically gathers on their past;
any damn thing is given moral prestige.

XVII

A bench in a college dreams
of a responsible citizen of character
during the mid-day,
and suddenly it gets broken
and collapses on him,
The stark black asphalt of the blackboard
The powder from the chalk
which smeared irrelevant knowledge
blows away with the wind
becoming *rangoli*.

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Incoherent snatches of haughty songs
scatter and float from every window.
And simultaneously
throbs vivacity from
the awkward parallel lines of
rustling vivacity,
The roof and the bench
get intoxicated with drugs;
the college becomes a rotating stage
for the practice of popular Hindi songs
and the established politics.

I get submerged up to the head
in the heap of torn shoes.
Freezing temperature
boils up in hands;
legs are missing;
cracks fall in the eyes instead of pupils;
backbone becomes numb,
stirring of termite in the brain,
drops of dry blood strewn all around;
subdued voices roam
through every corner;

A wall picture blooms on fantasy,
life has to be thrown away

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on the heap of garbage
after sealing it with values.

XVIII

Deceptive past brought before
in an instant
like the giant from Alladin's lamp .

Deep images of stone in the mind and at every corner
stones of torture;
Collapsing fate at every corner.
Allarakha's stroke collapsing
on the meeting point of sarod
while the body jolts with slow rhythm.

Ruthless ferocity hidden
in every lullaby and elegy
which is concealed within.
The oil is not there
In the culture of their traditional lamps
burning in the sanctum,
wicks are not theirs
and even the light is not for them;
only burning mutely within
and smouldering of closed communications.

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Only the bait can understand
the unbreakable bond
of threads in the net
and innocent fish who wriggle
after swallowing tortures
keep searching for oneself
through every theorem.

Even if the meeting point is wrong
the stroke of fate never misses
dense past, dense memories
dense jumble of complicated theorem in life.

XIX

Escaping the watch of cause and effect,
alluring purpose in full bloom,
spreading thorns all over the body ,
the tree of cotton-silk is standing gracefully.
Its garish flowers on the cheeks,
stiff and straight nose,
a coral tree flower on the lips
two butterflies come for shelter
in the eaves of breasts;
the amazing rhythm of black marble
from the intoxicated statue by Bernini
in the hair.

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well-structured tree in the limbs,
and the chemical in the eye
washing my gloomy negative.

I have firmly held
the frozen time
in one of my hands
and with the second,
gathering shards of a shattered glass
through which I would see
new shapes of fear, wonder, unknown emotions,
inexpressible emotions grown lively
with new life.

The momentary purpose
goes on spreading for the entire life.
Sometimes the flat reality rips
and the melacholy at the core surges up
descending in the nether world of the mind,
The deep failure of searching corners,
shaking darkness
of communication beyond the body
is shrouded
by the sensible ice piling up
on both sides.

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XX

One level of life out of many
becomes formless with time,
becomes isolated, mute, formless;
initial colours fade away
and the body becomes soluble in reality.

Even then my creativity turns formless into form
and the ultra-sensuous into the sensuous,
and unravels the inanimate to the animate
through words.
My lines descend
uncountable spiral stairs of unexpressed
and reach the ground.
And maintaining the meeting point
of primal loneliness
forcibly enter the crowd on the road.

And sometimes on my way come,
the floating empty space in my poem;
acutely observing bodiless eyes
cannot hide
the numb emptiness getting
more dense during a lonely moment.
I kept living each moment intensely

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without any self-defence
without any armour.

A stray bird crossing the forest
of feelings was not mine.
Illegitimate communication
that becomes half-dead
under loneliness was not mine.
The haughty horses stopping at the water
which had lost its source
Were not mine.

Only the sensible land was mine
and in the lava of its womb
the metropolis that was devastated
and had become nameless
was mine.

XXI

Leaving behind all her childhood
out of the threshold
Mother entered the cattle pen
of the joint family.
Her earlier life had burned out
in the holy fire and
she was separated from her home

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after crossing the ritual of seven steps.
Watching at the growing leaves and flowers
on the tree of the cattle pen
her light was shrouded
and blindfolding herself
she drudged at her domestic chores
day and night;
she made *rotis* and dung cakes
with her hands from which
henna had faded.

When her sixteenth Shrawan went by
her lips had parted with the first dream
and then the same dream at intervals.
Eight times she had one dream out of those
which collapsed
before it bloomed completely.
Seven mushrooms swelled on the fertile land,
and after parasitic life was disturbed,
drooped during the very bloom;
They could not drink
the continuous dews of her pains
spilling from her eyes.

I revolted against the cattle pen
for her sake.

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She then with cold gaze
turned her back looking at me
and suffering repeatedly,
from the remaining mushrooms,
continued the war of her life as before.
Then I realized--
life is terribly irrelevant.

XXII

While looking through
the microscopic lens of daily routine
the unbearable past is frozen
in every line and figure.
Father got worn out
yet nothing happened.

He did not get any contentment in life;
hope and despair dried up
in the chemicals of his brain.
No leaf or bud was growing in the dark.

When the innocent child
insisting for a story
he was told the story of a migratory bird
that returned flying all alone
for thousands of mile

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after laying eggs,
bringing tears to his eyes
when he told Father not to go tomorrow,
with a flash something trembled.

When I saw in Father's eyes
going to the farm
wearing snapped footwear,
I was thinking on the way:
So many seasons have gone by
and yet birds have not
returned to the nest.

Children, grandchildren,
daughters-in-law gone to their homes--
while lifting the heavy burden of life,
memories can be stretched as much as possible
but cannot be snapped
nor left behind.
And father looks through the neem tree
dry banks of the river and
a tamarind tree on the shore.

Life blown away by the wind;
jumble of disrupted relations.
Human emotions bloomed

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only for the sake of telling
trickled within
and dried up
but burned with every penny.

XXIII

A wheel expanding as vast as the cosmos
went over the chest with a terrible speed
into eternity
and a bond of blood fell loose
merged untimely into missing pronoun.

After biting a piece of my own life
and putting it on the funeral pyre
a terrible dance of flames
flared up inside me;
it instantly burned in the space within,
and terrible void
went on spreading within.

Regaining myself
When the night flared up, I poured
the chilled water from the well
over myself,
hanging for drying
rags of twenty-year-old memories
on the tamarind tree on the cremation ground

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I returned home.
Saw only once turning back
getting overwhelmed.
The empty space inside the banana inflorescence
started moving towards primal space.

Death changed all internal contexts
quickly disentangled the firm knots
of every relationship;
snapped filaments of relatives
in the vast group;
I firmly fastened life
with the remaining threads;
Stirring past and future,
life became boring in the present
losing the actor and action
meaningless, inactive.

XXIV

Dense peace in winter
Snow like fallen leaves of autumn
Sad non-existence of leaves
Skeleton of trees like memories
Life on those skeletons of new leaves
Again, caressing in the new season.
Sciophytes growing in every house
Come from dreams

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Garish flowers in summer
Cool, shining colours of leaves and flowers
Unfamiliar waves in the scarce air of the evening
Saw-sharp pieces in the African music floating
Changing shapes of autumn

Time spilled after getting frozen
And becoming space
Valleys are crammed with new-comer blades
With enthusiastic shrubbery
With flying and jumping
Flower-coloured flocks

And ripping the tight weaving of lost life
Beyond the seven seas
A bird whirls in the void of afternoon
Then the incomprehensible non-duality
In the first creativity
Brings it softly on the ground

Growing in the muslin womb
The joints in the continuous chain
Of death and creativity
Get stuck up
In the mutual innate void.

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XXV

Terrible burden on chest
of the light in a hospital
and an entire ancient solitude
in every dark corner
boiling lava through
every part of the body
how every pain is intense
pure, motionless, mysterious and flexible
and through time, age, place, awareness
and all sensuous dimensions
again surging up
like a wave at the ebb that swallows fish
how every pain is absolute and non-existent
self-regulating and self-replicating
sniffing only being and easily getting hooked
to the bait of creativity.

The ocean gets quickly unravelled
before the eyes.
Flag staffs of desires
Swing in loneliness.
How everything seems strange.
The slate wipes out all the life in the hospital.
The letters of code of conduct get imprinted

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on it again from the beginning
and punctuation marks of relations.
The hospital becomes a temporary stop
for evaluation
and illness an antenna
withdrawing quickly
with the touch of death.

XXVI

How enthusiastic I had become.
While facing death
I had adorned my
pure ornament of pain.
Nature dousing inside the eyes
and there was festival of abstraction
on the shores of organs.

And when the shores dodged
death-adoring sand slipped from hands.
Fate brightened up.
in the holy fire
with the fire of reality
non-corrosive and true hymn
started resonating from the inside.

"Truth" is a metal
that never rusts.

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Gandhi Memorial College, Dr. Fadl Bhantalab Jammu

Uncountable are its activities in the environment
in the ultimate truth
in power
in attachment
in pub or in playing cards .

O the conscience hidden in
my primitive mind
my creativity is denied by all activities
and I urge you to come
and be my companion as I am going--
from probability to reality
from confusion to delusion
from sensation to suffering.

XXVII

I adorned my great soul with
ornaments of deficiency
put on attractive clothes of deficiency
gave uncountable no-promises
and during a season of non-existence
I entered the house becoming
a threshold of zero.
Lived the life of passionate ignorance
ate to the full with no food
adorned senses with hollow no-ornaments

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Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bandlaguda

slept on no-bed
heard soundless music
drew different shapes of negation
played the hide and seek
searching ten directions of nothingness
went on gyrating from Y to N
my little wishes were nothing
and when I was spoiled by arrogance
unwanted pains bloomed on my non-existence .
I lost from myself
I lost and surrendered to my no-god
I prayed
O no-god thrust your no-weapon
in my hollowness within
and subtract me from thevoid of anti-matter.

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D)

Poems from

Bayka Aani Itar Kavita

(Women and Other Poems)

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Digital Archive, Jammu

22

Becoming a Butterfly

Becoming a butterfly
And circling around me
I found a fossil
Of an immature woman.

When I would not yet understand
The meaning of eyes on wings
Even then I could
Balance the damage on wind.
On my glance
I could stop the vast throbbing
Of the universe outside.

Those days
The flower on the grass
Had the company of the wind
Before the birth of lust
Of the fresh sunlight on dews
Of mysterious darkness of dusk.

Stopping fluttering
The woman went away
In the unknown space
And now under the heavy rock
Of living
Suddenly I saw a fossilized flower.

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O woman
You must be safe
In that cocoon.
Stop the flow of your living
For a moment
And take away a fossil
Under the rock.

The burden of your non-existence
is increasing on my chest.
Moss is gathering on the rock
And there is the fear of slipping
Any moment.

O woman help me
Remove the snare
Around my poem.

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23

On the Blind Morning

Tidying up after the rain
In the blind morning.

Closed door on the terribly
Desolate empty sunlight
Of the afternoon.

Long drooping shadows
Of bare trees
In the evening.

The collapsing darkness
Of midnight.
Incomprehensible torturing toy.

Oblique wisdom
While passing through
Vertical and horizontal experiences.

Seasons have elapsed
After ripping life.

Why this search
For fresh leaves
After shedding of trees.

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24

So Long as There Was a Cloud of Affection Overhead

So long as there was
a cloud of affection overhead
there was compassion
in the eyes
love in the heart.
There was sensible strength
to blow on one's own sorrow,
The world fully developed and desirable.
There was a bird
on the heavy branch of loneliness.
When the cloud overhead
swept by
the lid on the mind
fell off to a side,
the fire in the body
crossing the delicate
region of the heart
descended the mind.
The flames of revenge flared up
towards the cloud.

Even now a cloud
of soot and smoke
comes overhead
It is difficult to stop the storm
That is why
consider whatever is there is final.
The spirituality of nothingness
is harmful.

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25

Neither Exactly a Morning nor Exactly an Afternoon

Neither exactly a morning nor exactly an afternoon
So is the time now
Like a spinster.
But there is sunlight outside
Which can be tolerable
And reliable
But I am imprisoned
In your cellar.

Neither fully awake nor fully asleep
Such is the time
And now the relations
And bonds are getting cruel.
I want to go out
And all the doors of your cellar
Are sealed.

I would have certainly
Murdered you
But at this hour
you are inside me
and I am afraid of
myself getting killed.

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26

Touched by Your Grief

This suffering, this suffocation, this storm--
in this whirlpool of male ego
what else is possible
different from this?

Woman,
in this developed, brutal world which traces
all aching relationships
to repressed sexuality
nobody has a time
to listen to your lament.

Those who destroyed their days and nights,
touched by your grief
have become faceless.

Woman,
to settle in an anywhere world
after uprooting oneself;

to compose oneself
after waking up from a dream
half--way through;

to spring up to the surface
after sinking
into the depths of sorrow;

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the thought that
someone watches you--all this
is enough to strengthen you
to cross the desert
---if only
you can stop the mirage
from getting your eyes!

(Translated from Marathi by Chandrashekhar Jahagirdar)

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27

When We Were Not Our Own

When we were not our own
We were each others
And when we became our own
Even then we were each other's.

Now we have become
Someone else's and of others
From inside and outside
Even then the invisible fraction is mutual.
Our world is firmly standing
On that prop.

At this age
It is unnecessary
To search for
Who we are.

Its enough that we are.

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28

What Sort of a Painting Is This?

What sort of painting is this
Of a mansion in ruins, deserted and crumbling?

What sort of colours
Faded, smoky and blurry?

This picture is distorted.

Regret for things
Not in their appointed places.
Charming beauty
In the mystery
Of what is missing.

All this is distorted
Such things get stuck up
Inside and become a whirlpool.

The tree becomes dry
Due to insufficient juice.
Life is disrupted due to
Incomplete dialogue.
The half eclipse swallows everything.
Whatever is half
Makes life desolate.

Wipe away all that is half
And start the journey
Anew once again.

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29

Whatever This World Is Like

Whatever this world is like
consider it as your own child
put up with all these
good and bad experiences;
the more you forget them
you will save yourself,
you will turn solid;
the more you descend to the core
after getting melted
you have to search for
your own mould;
only heat belongs to the world.

The tree has bloomed fully
but only the branch we hold
happens to be infested with
termite and is fragile
and except the place where
our head bangs,
all the soil is soft.

Is this fate or
the essence of life
getting trapped in thoughts
is futile.

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Much is left in this world
other than man
to devastate a surrounding
for some abstract idea
or to understand the balance
of the entire universe
excluding the self.

To leave one's mind
with the wind
for the sake of salvation
or to adorn pain
imprisoning inside the lotus.

O woman,
let favourite inspiration
surge up.
We have freedom of choice.

O woman,
you are just
an excuse because
I really needed to convince myself.

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30

The Glacier

At long last the glacier has collapsed
melted, fell off right from its bottom--
sheer hara-kiri.

Thickness of years dissolved,
it had never bowed down to the stormy wind,
nor had cared for the fiery sun,
such hostile atmosphere--
even then it held closely every particle;
now it is all over
with the final collapse of the sublime glacier.

Is this happiness or sorrow
good or evil
real or accumulated
or is the glacier deprived of itself
covering its agonized bottom
under water?

Is it the fire outside
or sheer chance—
you ask ironically
for the cause of this improbable event.

Truly,
how difficult it has become even for the glacier
to vouch for the latent heat
stored inside.

(Translated from Marathi by Chandrashekhar Jahagirdar)

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Gandhi Memorial College Of Education & Research Library, Kanpur

31
Guilt

My face
which you loved so intensely
has behind it yet another face
but divided and cracked.

Did you never feel like
scratching the sophisticated surface
and looking inside at the dividing line,
or did you never have breathing space for it?

Even the one who suffers does not know
such is the terrifying fire of guilt
at the disease of hiding it
by keeping awake perpetually.

Around us
is the delicate screen
of civilization
which is not that bad;
otherwise you would have to
piece together my face
by picking up innumerable bits.

I know warmth and wetness are impossible
without woman's womb;
but what shall I do with this guilt
burning everything entirely?

(Translated from Marathi by Chandrashekhar Jahagirdar)

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32
Accompanying Anybody's Sorrow

These are not days
To accompany anybody's sorrow.
Actions and reactions of all happenings
Have become moulded.

Whatever happens
Does not strike your core.
What happened is immediately forgotten
Intimation of whatever is yet to happen
Depresses you.
Every moment goes by
Making you restless.

Whenever and whichever woman
I had to get involved with
All ropes were
Eventually snapped
All faces automatically got devastated
All the doors were sealed.

To become a scarecrow
Because of the fear of birds
Means maturity.
The wind of sorrow
Cannot enter
The void within.

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33
Dismantle Your Geodesic Dome

The woman who never found
a rhyme for living
erected a huge geodesic dome
and constructed in it
a multi-coloured city of dreams.

For her desires,
the sky inside was the limit;
ambitions wood echo
around the whole dome;
the woman would turn into
Menaka, Madonna or Munro
dressed as Gargi, she would
talk like Maitreyi.

The woman would say, as for me
Indra serves as my water-carrier;
Brahma makes pots for me;
Vishnu and Mahesh plant
saplings in them.

She would say,
instead of lamps, I have hung up the sun
in the dining room
and the moon in the bedroom;
as for the stars, I just hate them.

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The woman would say, as for me
I never can tell where I will be--
Manasarovar and Paris, Hanovar
all are same to me.

She would say, I am not afraid of anyone.
I, the self-contained, I the Maya, I the Brahma
I the non-duality of Shiva and Shakti.

The woman would say--
but the woman would only say all this
and get lost in self-complacency.

But whenever the woman stepped out of her dome
and forgot that she was outside it
she would stumble against a stone
injuring her toe--
even a minor scratch would give her a wound.

The woman was a sovereign empress
her right to live was absolute
tantrums, irony, histrionics
were her only protective armour.

Only once did I peep into the geodesic dome;
it was full of thick, dense, loneliness;

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sitting in a corner, helplessly,
the woman was crying like a little girl;
she could not bear her loneliness.

This loneliness of women,
this life without a rhyme,
this male environment,
this tilted balance
between the mind and the brain.

Woman,
even now it is not too late;
the road of naturalness
passes by the houses of the ordinary.
Dismantle your geodesic dome
and dissolve yourself
into the unlimited crowd outside.

(Translated from Marathi by Chandrashekhar Jahagirdar)

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34

A Middle-Aged Woman from the Middle Class

A middle-aged smug woman
From the middle class
Mulled explosively
After giving up the medium path
That soul means manifestation of the male.
Constructed by men
There is nothing called soul.
There is only the body
Because it can be proved
Experimentally.
The woman had already proved
Her body
Experimenting with two or three men.

Mulling over,
The woman found out
The falseness of the soul.

On the verge of forty
And before shouting 'Ureka! Ureka!'
The woman's mind wriggled
Like the snapped tail
Of a lizard.

The woman got scared.
She mulled in her mind

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throughout the night
And came to the unrestrained conclusion
That the mind spoils the body.
At an unwanted moment
The mind ferments the body.
The woman was restless
Throughout the night.

The woman showing off
The urban, stiff parts of her body
Could not sleep even
On the second night.
Her mind kept going in circles
In the void of the brain.
Like a bat
It did not find
A single place to rest.

It is not that I don't understand
The restlessness of the woman.
But I will not tell the woman

O woman, soil will of course
Cling to the wet feet.
While changing from here to there
It is more precious to have a pure mind.

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35
Being Poeticized

With the sadness of intensity, the woman is poeticized
and right in the heart of spring drop down
the wings of the butterflies
and right in the scorching summer
untimely clouds gather in the sky.

Dried up, waterless rivers envelope
the woman's uncanny body
the simultaneous obsession with sleep and jealousy
lies over the body of the woman, in broad daylight,
the thin layer of the late night.

In the bright, clean air, the sea sends up a shower of poison,
the ebb-tide intensity of the sea
rubs salt in the woman's wounded shore;
water that rises up in her eyes, mercury-like,
starts refracting the woman's living
in nowhere directions.

The women's philosophy of hurry and excessive intensity
does not allow the excited electron
to find its exact orbit.
Hanging on the door, like a black magic doll
the husband dances wildly
to the intense, incomprehensible incantations
of the woman.

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It must have been a decade
since the woman's body, its essence squeezed out,
was past its prime
and now in this mild winter
her whole body gets titillated
with the clandestine touch of the Basant Panchami breeze.
Now the days of the poem are numbered.

(Translated from Marathi by Chandrashekhar Jahagirdar)

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36
Khajuraho

The erotic couple on the Vishwanath Temple at
Khajuraho stands awkwardly.

The woman who had stood there from the Middle Ages
clasping the male
suddenly threw him off
and stood erect
like a soldier in an army march-past.

The male, smiling, complacent, for ages
is suddenly confounded, crestfallen;
the woman has become arrogantly triumphant
like the twenty-first century.

What is the woman up to?
What god asked her for all this bother and fuss?
Why does she think of this sinister act?

Dismantled, in despair,
the erotic male has lost his confidence;
his emotional defences have collapsed.
Completely out of order is the male

Whatever has happened to the woman?
Has she started ogling at the man on the next panel
or has she finally understood

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the male cunning of love?
Or is the woman trying to relate
the meaning of kama to artha?

To relate to one another the artha in Purushartha
the dharma in Sharirdharma
moksha in Kama
hardly befits this woman.
After all, isn't there something like
civilization and culture?
The woman in the Khajuraho erotic sculpture
has put the male in a fitful fix;
now, gradually the infection will spread
all over the temple.

The woman is thinking of leaving Khajurao
for the city.

(Translated from Marathi by Chandrashekhar Jahagirdar)

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37
In Your Mirror

You came
as a tempestuous restless ocean.

I thwarted your shore
spreading in great disorder.

What was a relationship then?

I understood
your awful tumult,
your restlessness, your revolt
with which you were searching for your own identity.

I had seen
in your mirror
the shadow of blood-relationship.

Crossing enormous distances
I had come to you
to be the embankment
of your restless ocean.

You subsided,
you became calm, sober
and gently
I launched you

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in the real ocean
like a paper boat.
Within no time
you were lost
beyond the seven seas.

It has been ages now.
I forgot you;
your memories
is wearing off, like camphor,
in the flow of living.

Now perhaps, there must have set in
the season of snow;
a migratory bird has come
to convey your well-being.

When I came to know
that you were happily settled
with your feet
only planted
in normal life
and that even before you searched for them;
your identity, your restlessness were lost
for a moment when I saw myself dispersed
helter-skelter and melancholy.

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Woman,
come,
let's meet once again
and find for our relationship
a beautiful traditional name.

Let us sit once again
sorting out entangled life
and undoing the strange knots of relationships.

Sipping beer
from restaurant to restaurant
we'll try to change ourselves
rather than the world.
Let us be
easy and natural
in the terrifying environment
of the inevitable metropolis.

(Translated from Marathi by Chandrashekhar Jahagirdar)

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38

Spending Entire Life in Hard Work

What must a woman be feeling
about God
when bedridden at ninety
and having spent her entire life in hard work?

What must a woman be feeling
about God
when everything was tidy
and at its appointed place
but devastated
because she could not conceive a child?

What must a woman be feeling
about God
dragging each day for her son
and living mutely
swallowing the cruelty
of a perverted husband?

What must a woman be feeling
about God
when the awareness of being
a woman bloomed
and got gloomy looking at the sky?

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39

The Being of a Woman

A dream opens at the seams,
the being of a woman
in sleep itself.

The woman knows
the difference between
being befouled
and nothingness.

Frightened, the woman leaps off
from the cliff.

The earth does not stand bail for her
and the sky
runs away
with pitiless eyes.

Though fallen from the cliff
the woman hangs
in mid-air.

What happens in reality is only this;
the woman's shadow
gets mangled under the train.

Right at the peak of compassion

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the body-peacock dies
even before it has time to strut.

Curves in the plumage
take somersaults
lying about scattered.

The remaining spectators
continue to live
mistaking
the shadow for the body.

(Translated from Marathi by Chandrashekhar Jahagirdar)

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40

Otherworldly Stupor in the Opium Affected Empire

Otherworldly stupor
in the opium-affected empire;
Pervasive darkness like black marble .

My life had started towards
an unknown constellation;
denying the body
the sky suddenly collapsed on me.

A Milky Way flowed over my face;
like tousled hair
the ocean inside stirred with the touch.

The sky descended on my chest;
its deep and faint sobs
exploded stars in my body.

It was followed by
a shy, piercing shriek
which descending in my body
got stuck
and lost its voice.

Then the unrestrained sky
collapsed more strongly.
The sky swept away
the layer of ozone
and strangled me
in its eternal arms.

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Rivers of blood started drifting
Towards the centre.
Wild waves kept surging
Towards the complete image.

The sky softly kept
two dark clouds
on my eyes.
My vision, pressed, fell
into the netherworld.

The clouds crushed my innocent face.
The fresh fluttering of lips stopped
going deep inside.

Then for quite some time
the havoc of lightning
tattoos of wounds
on my naked body

The sky entered every cell
full moon in the sky
haste in the chest;
slowly the fingers moved
on latitudes and longitudes;
a gigantic cyclone rose
in the tropical region.

Becoming thin

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I slipped in the space;
got stuck up,
trembled easily in the black hole.
I was reduced to ashes
by the unbearable energy,
getting thin, was dissolved in the sky.

The centre on which
time and space became one--
I suffered insensitivity
for a moment or two.
Then abruptly regaining myself
got disrupted when I awoke.
Around me were only
torturing illusions.

In fact I wanted
to stop this deluge of words.
and the dead body of experience
drifted with its flow.

But I knew--
meaning is born from
loss of virginity.
And only a poem can swallow
Such a disaster.

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41

A Woman in the Bus

The bus speeds away, slicing through the moonlight;
inside sits
a woman with life's frozen luggage
seeking the same old destination again and again.

Outside, in the motionless silence of the moonlight's ocean
two sickly flashes of light
speed towards the city
like an antenna.

Inside, brown darkness splashes up.
Outside, strange moonlight falls;
in between is the dividing window glass.

Trees fly past, scared to death;
a strange silence hypnotizes the surroundings;
under the slide of the moonlight
disappears
the meaning of the clean mysterious land.

Outside, the tar road is lying dead;
the incongruous bus
takes to its wheels.

And inside
the woman's dialogue with herself is broken;
her loneliness pierces the nether region
in spiralling motion;

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outside, the moonlight twitters without the beak;
its echo with its voice lost
spread everywhere inside the woman.

Melancholy trees
stand on one foot;
slicing their own shadows
darkness penetrates
through the branches
scuffling with the leaves.

The woman sits at the window
drawing together the branches of the past.

Confused, the bus gathers more speed.
Tremendous negligence meted out to the woman.
Moonlight continues to live
playing with itself indulgently.

The inverted sequence of living
is life itself
but really nobody
ever remembers the woman.
Realities within and without
melt into each other
seeking to destroy the woman.

(Translated from Marathi by Chandrashekhar Jahagirdar)

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42
What Does a Woman Need to Survive After All

What does a woman need to survive after all?
A husband, a child, her own house
A job, some money, a little love.

And yet I am terribly restless.
I can clearly see
The roots of my sorrow
Their expansion is devastating me.
Who should I say?
Who should I confide in?

I have come a long distance
And am alone on this island
Where only carnivorous trees grow
And wild beasts live on money.

Whenever I open my heart
The scorpion hidden in a crevice
Starts coming out
And its pincer pops out.
I want to sting
but I don't know where
And about what.
I am confused.
My discretion is loaded with poison.

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I am scared of the walls.
The roof of the house
Is blowing away.
Doors and windows are getting melted.
The wind outside is entering.
What should I do?

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43

No House is as Sensible as Sorrow

No house of one's own is
as sensible as sorrow
and a house is to unload
a woman's vast loneliness;
or to borrow for a moment
from intimate ones.

Nothing can be forgotten
in loneliness.
Suffering don't sleep even for a moment.
The pain of having left the child at home
cannot be suppressed.
On the road in the evening
the woman's voice is lost in space.
Faces tremble around the woman
of a drunken husband.
The house becomes a grave in the darkness.
Sufferings become mother and co-wife.
Though the mind comes forward
to confront eternal peace
senses become hostile.

The mind of the woman
becomes inimical with life.
The impenetrable mountain

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on the limits of the inside and the outside
cannot be surmounted.
Suffering which devours thoughts
spill on the red round-mark on the forehead
of the woman.
The burden of life throbs
on the faceless body.
The woman cannot embrace future.

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44

Loneliness of a Woman is

Loneliness of a woman is
Enigmatic, incomprehensible
And yet
As easy as a chrysalis becoming a butterfly
Or the unfolding of a petal.

Loneliness of a woman
Has mellowness and maturity
Loneliness has a lace
of incomprehensible suffering;
There is strength in loneliness,
To come out with a mask
Of indifference even after entering
The sorrow within.

The shoots of a woman's loneliness
Sprout in the history of the family.
Loneliness finds the land of existence
On the latitudes and longitudes
Of wishes and desires.

A faint beam of a woman's loneliness
Gets suddenly stuck up
In the eyes of a man
While passing through a dark tunnel
And then it brightens
The edges of a man's crystal

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The man begins to understand
The meaning of darkness.
and the darkness of a pond
The meaning of darkness stuck
to the leaves in the evening.

The only sin of a man
Is that
He has entered inside
By knowing an impenetrable wall
Around loneliness.

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45

On the Complications in Relations

Because you cannot find
An answer to the complications in relations
Unless you finish yourself.
An old man started asking the trees
What he should do.

Should he die happily
Or live a restless life?
Should he embrace a blind journey
Or compose himself?

The trees drooped
dropping yellow leaves on the wind.
And composing remaining yellowness
Pointed a finger
At a woman who had
Emaciated untimely

Trees don't shed leaves with a flutter
Nor bang branches
At least until when
The defeated men
Have a place to clear
The sky in the mind.
But what about women?
Before asking this question

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The rock, water, flames, space
And the storm within
Fetched the answer
From the newspaper.

Let the five elements be admired
Which are not felt when alive,
And before blooming life
Render peace to the souls
Of women!

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46

The Woman I Considered as My Mother

The woman I considered as my mother
through whose compassionate eyes
I read "Ramdas",
of whose tangle
I had become a witness,
Died swallowing the sea.
The news of her death
did not even reach me.

The woman who spent her life
nipping the points of thorns,
who swallowed fatigue
while walking over the ladder
of the household reading "Ramdas";
who wanted dampness in life
till the end;
news about her dissolved
in the air before reaching me.

Even after the fire got doused
the distance becomes restless
for quite some time;
then memories come surging up
then reality becomes smoky;
afterwards you have to console yourself
in the drift of life;

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the acid at the centre
goes on becoming water
after some time;
the mildew of thoughts grows over emotions;
the cold moon darkens with philosophy;
the rhyme of oblivion is found on death.

Leaving everything behind
the woman went away into eternity
and the other woman
brought my kite to the ground
which was leaping towards eternity.
Gathering neatly the thread lying about
the woman gripped
at the thread roller more tightly.

The woman who is not my mother
but certainly is somebody's.
That's why she knows
the method of solving
the sum of subtraction.

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47
We Must Quarrel

For so many years
we have been, together, house-holding
but never have we quarrelled
like our parents.

You have never made our children
sit in front of us
and make them judge our life;
never told them the saga of my failures
your hard-work, your sufferings;
your journey always deprived of happiness,
on the path of life.
Never have you uttered a single word
about the deprived and neglected lives of children
hell-like torments for daughters after their marriages,
a rented house, mountainous loans,
humiliation from the community,
ungrateful people, selfish friends no more friendly,
unnecessary love, unnecessary expenditure,
the vanity of self-importance.

You have never uttered a word against all this.
There were moments, it is true, as exceptions,
when you got emotional
but avoided the eruption
with an avalanche of courage.

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Even water gets evaporated
in the scorching heat of the sun
leaving its salt behind
wheraeas you are a living woman.

Oh, this is not the way to live.
We must quarrel intensely some time
in the presence of our children.

Otherwise
when we cease to be
in this horrible world
our children will search for a philosophy in their failure.
They will take forbearance as spirituality
and will coax all their suppressed sorrows
under the gesture of civilization!

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48
I Recognized You

I recognized you, for the first time
in a heavy downpour

I experienced your touch
one evening
in the mysterious darkness under the banyan tree.

I gathered you in my arms
in blood-freezing cold;
accepted you
in a strange blue fleshy light.

Always, a song would swoop down
from the sky
perching sometimes on me,
sometimes on your branch
middling....

Do you remember all this?
What happened to that intense wonder?

Even today it rains heavily
but mechanically.

Even today the evening descends
but without virginity.

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Even today stone-lime darkness spreads all around
but without mystery;
even today the branches rustle
but without the song.

We have become so integral
to each other
that dialogue is meaningless;
so united
that the touch does not cause sparks.

Now creation means
an ancient legend
and intensity
a rumour spreading like wildfire.

Despite this
we have started blooming again,
like fabled creepers, on dead moments
ripening progressively
in the increasing mellowness.

Did I tell you
that just recently a thorn
is stuck deep inside me?

I ask myself
what happened to your innocence?

(Translated from Marathi by Chandrashekhar Jahagirdar)

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49

Which Wave Has Drifted Your Body

Which wave has drifted your body
To my shore?
What for?

I woke you up
Animated you
And your journey started
Together , parallel.

You crossed the barrier of attraction
Descended into the dark valley of love.
Sometimes you were lost
In the neck-high grass;
Sometimes in the dense crowd of trees
You searched for me;
At every turn you held me firmly.

You were walking towards
Such a pole
Where body is covered
With incomprehensible spiritualism
And the body is transformed
into a spiritual body
And the context of the soul sticks to the body.

With the sheer idea of soul
One can tolerate any separation;
One can avoid even a push from a cliff.
The paths coming to end suddenly

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Find alternatives.
Dream and desire go on becoming ochre.

The age when all sensations
Become intense for no reason, and
Come and stop at the end of nerves.

At this age
emotions are one-sided
And start running
In a single direction.
The age when thoughts
Are unilateral
And keep moving round
Inside a single circumference;

The age when you cannot be
Without any part of body.

You went walking
A difficult distance
From attraction to inner bonds.

Accepted me
With all my shortcomings.

We kept walking
On a track for the whole life.
Even then you did not
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Let the yoke of conventions
Settle on your neck.

Whenever we had to be wounded
Our heads automatically
Remembered each other's shoulder.

Though our desires could not be parallel
We did not feel awkward.
We didn't get stuck up
With stress and strain.
When you descended
Into my dark tunnel
You realized you are caught up
In your own cellar.
You looked at me
I was earnestly requesting you
For light.

How swiftly time drifted away
Don't know if we have stopped
Or are still walking.
Now I am becoming
Tremulous and transparent
Day by day
And you, more and more constant
And hard
And yet you are in me
Inseparable, saturated.

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50

In a Huge Family Like a Banyan Tree

While growing in a huge family
Like a banyan tree,
So many branches got stuck up
In the mind.
The knots formed
Could not be untied
For whole life.
I have arrived here
While trying to remove the knots.

I used to get stuck up myself
In a corner in the house,
Get lost in the pages of a book.
Tried to gauge all things
And myself
Struggled to get out of myself;
Denied the world in a book
And the actual one;
Grandmother's warm side,
Mother's shadow,
Affection of assumed aunts.
I would keep one relation after another
Under the hammer and an anvil
And see the bits of myself sometimes
And of others with resolve.

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There never was a sheer woman
In my search.
My sums would spread
Around everybody equally
And wrap everyone
One by one

I flourished like a shrub
On a barren land
Unprotected, unnoticed.
Whatever dampness
I had in my lot
Amid the rush of brothers and sisters
I stored it inside me.

I scratched innocent shapes
In the green expanse
Lying under a tree.
I heard the tinkling of the air,
The rustling of the peepal tree,
The faint screaming of dried leaves,

The sound of the wind
Echoing in the valley.
Darkness on the dry shore,
Solitude in the forest,

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Taught me to listen to
The throbs of my heart,
To follow the clamour within,
To know oneself.
While searching the shapes of emotions
I went on asking again and again
To myself
Why tread over the blurred paths
In the mind
To struggle for open air
Coming out of neck-high grass
To understand
The mutual relation of
Acceptance and rejection.
What for this useless struggle?
What for this earnestness to tortures?

To descend in the tangle for ease
To admit ignorance for knowledge
To get stuck up
In an illusory maze
For the light inside myself,

I searched paths of liberation
In the minds of others
Went around searching

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Holy banyan tree one after another
For revelation;
Every woman around me
Became Sujata
Every day bloomed like a full moon
Doors of knowledge half-opened,
Windows of awareness half-closed.
The moonlight that showered
Like revelation
Lighting up a little space
Went behind the clouds.
The remaining eternity
Was dark as before;
The remaining path
As amazingly onerous
As before.

Why this getting stuck up
In a wheel?
Why ask questions
That have no answers?
Why this uprooting of lilies?
Why bring our own roots in the open?

Is this living or self-deception--
Cheating or self-torturing

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Is this show-off to hide something,
Or is this a projection of nothing?

This whirling in search of a centre
Or going astray in the darkness spread out
In the middle of nature and perversion?

Whenever I saw
A woman inside and outside
I denied
Male dominated definitions
Of a woman.

I denied
Physical contexts
In the hypnotic circumference
Of a woman's sorrow.
I denied extreme conflicts
To understand a woman.

I denied public forms
In complex tangles
But to retain the is-ness of a woman
Hurt myself again and again.

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And even then
I don't want to make
Any statement
Or give the true answer
Of this psychedelic hypothesis.

All the paths of my life
Are entering in the vast totality
After internalizing and crossing a woman.

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51

"Women: The Epilogue"

What does a woman mean to you?
A woman means the very rhythm of creation
Of this universe.

And a man?
The essential attachment for a woman.

That's a lie, a sheer male ego.
A woman can go on even without a man.
I am not talking about exceptions.

Do you understand a woman?
Does it matter even up if I don't?

How can you write so many poems a priori?
I am in the least hurry to know
Either a poem or a woman.
And knowledge is always for the self.
After all, the other is always secondary
In the process of knowing.

Isn't it your selfishness?
Knowledge implies that
Love for the other is possible
Only in philosophy.

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Is women a means of knowledge for you?
Woman can never be the end.

Isn't it cruel to use women like this?
The paths of liberation would not have been different
Had I entered the core of passions.

Isn't entering the core a perversion?
Perversion means extreme deviation of mind.

And what is mind?
Extreme tortures of inward and outward journey.

Why this absurd search?
To know the tangles of living.

But why know at all?
To see the light of ease.

There is always the light,
But isn't it necessary to have a clear vision?
There is no guarantee that you can know
Everything by relying on your eyes.

For instance?
The mind of a woman.

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How is the mind of a woman?
Must be very different with every woman.

What about mine?
It is difficult to say exactly at this moment.

But I have been with you for so many years
Completely involved.
You have seen me for so many years
And I have been so transparent with you.
So you should be able to tell.
My search has not yet arrived
At the shut doors of conclusion.

Or are you afraid to tell?
May be.

Afraid of me or yourself?
May be of words.

And even then these poems?
Perhaps to get rid of the fear.

Are you afraid of my mind?
Ask about a poem rather than the mind.
Where do so many women come from

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In your poems? And how?
Leaving behind the actual life,
They appear on the fuzzy papers of the mind.

That means they get transformed
From the concrete to the abstract?
Living itself is abstract, otherwise,
This whole journey would have been boring.
Is the living of a woman abstract?
Everybody, including a woman,
Struggles for a concrete shape.

What is a shape?
A struggle for existence

What is existence?
Just to be and to be means
To be related to others.

Do you know such a woman?
I have observed by mother,
Sister, you and our daughter;
Each one closely.

Do you know what happens to a woman
while searching for a shape?

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Her search gets buried
In the male environment.

Are you one of the factors
of that environment?
I have always tried to transform myself
Without any establishment.

What is establishment?
A meadow for the privileged.
Exploitation of the meek,
Protection for the inefficient
Behind the bulwark.

Will you rebel against the establishment?
Certainly, but only at my own level.

Isn't it wrong for a single wave
to dash against the solid rock?
A gigantic establishment can swallow
Movements, protests, communities, organizations
More easily than an individual.

Is there anything permanent
as well as changing in an individual?
Intense morality.

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Can one's morality going oblique
to the community, achieve anything?
It helps the civilization.

What is civilization?
Something that eases living.

And culture?
To make it beautiful.

Is culture, in anyway,
concerned with sorrow?
The shape of sorrow determines culture.

Is there so much strength
in a woman's sorrow?
Sorrows, whose roots are buried in causes
Are not the true ones.

Isn't sorrow inevitable
if being means to be related to others?
Such sorrows have alternatives.

What about sorrows
that have no alternative?
Questions with no answers to them
Come to the mind.

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This is not true.
This is your fatalism.
I have been trying everything
Beyond living on this earth.

What about Fate?
Fate means the abstract philosophy
Of the defeated.

Do you love fate?
I don't, but maybe I am fascinated.

What is love?
To dissolve by forgetting one's being.

Do I love you?
Is it necessary to tell?
And if you love me
Isn't it better you say it?
To utter is to impair awareness
It makes awareness impure.

Then why this game of chess?
To make you aware.

Of what?

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Of my being, my acceptance of you
My living in you for so many years
With a singular and pure relationship.
No, no!
I have never come across a woman
With pure and singular relationship;
A woman who is only a wife, only a mother,
Or only a sister, or only an enemy,
A woman having no conflicts
And inner contradictions,
Love and revenge.
No, no!
There can never be such a woman.

If it's so
Then what is the difference between
A woman and a man?
Please, let me sleep peacefully
For a while!

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52

Suddenly at Midnight

When the light goes off
suddenly at midnight
for the first time
this city
appears like a constellation
spread disorderly in the sky.

The violent
man-eater buildings
that torture in the daylight
sink clumsily
into the innocent and natural moonlight.
The skeletons of roads
lie open desolately.

Shadows
begin to move intimately.
Darkness
melts downs completely
in the mystery
without any fear with all its purity
as if filtered through the primitive glass.
Then
the abrupt supply of electricity
agonizes the city.
Then

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the sensibility sunk up to the neck
in the mud of time
enigmatically writhes with pain
for the whole night.

(*Translated from Marathi by Dileep V. Chavan*)

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53
Notes on Water

Water accompanies us
From birth to the last breath;
Water is the last offering
On the bank of life.

Vedic bands pray to the water
By singing richas;
Cultured Anaryas
Enjoy wholeheartedly
Enacting the role of rain.
Water devises a strategy
Deceives all
Through the sheet-rock of time.

Water proves devastating
Following the command of Jehovah.
Water compels to wander
Outside the boat of Noah.
Water assumes the role of oil
In the desert of the prophet.
Water sings the songs of compassion
For Ashvatthama
Under the Ashvatth.a

Water becomes coaxing
While fondling on the shore.

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Water gulps down all civilizations
In its demonic stomach.
It washes out the cities like Pompeii
The planes trapped in a strange triangle;
Water becomes God
To make the inner commotion of Tuka float easily

Water pours in torrents
On the terrestrial latitude and longitude;
Water cracks
The borders on the map,
Causes strife
Among countries
Speaking different languages;
Water splits religion and caste,
Water hits the nail exactly,
Water pours in torrents
Like a classic poem;
Water makes the surroundings desperate
Even for a drop.
In its absence
The land becomes sapless
Fallacious
Prosaic.

Water becomes a lover
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During the unbearable loneliness.
Water soaks in the chest,
Rankles in its deepest core.
An eye becomes the universe
And the ocean hangs down
In the drop of tears.

The uncontrollable rain
Falls on the heart.
Seasons of suffering
Change rapidly
With the water
Or even without the water.

The lowing of the clouds
In the empty sky
Bridges the distance with emptiness.
Then splashes the water
And the unwanted memories.
Water itself begins to sing an elegy
In the emptiness.

Water awakens
The dreams of a new creation
Sleeping under the land.
When it plunders

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It cross-examines
The bushes and the trees.

The waves of protest
Lie idly and roar as well
On the mirage of water.
It is water
That transforms the *Chatak* bird
Into a panther.
Panthers leap forward
In the direction of water
And pounce on it.
During the passage of time
The panthers disappear
In the illusive mirage.

(*Translated from Marathi by Dileep V. Chavan*)

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54

O God

O God!
You are the cream of culture
boiled in the cauldron of history
and frozen.
You are the blackened glass
of the lantern
thrown into the dark corner of the mind.

God!
You are desperate to sprout
under my sceptical soil.
You are bereft of the pleasant, open air.
In the absence of colourless light
your entire body has become inactive.
Are you sleepy or unconscious?
Are you in a coma or hypnotized?
Is there still haughtiness in you?
Or are you actually dead, my God?

O God!
Who are you?
How do you look?
And why do you exist?
You exist because of void?
Or are you the same indifferent void?
Or you are above it

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And the infinite void in the chest.
Or are you somebody else
Altogether different
The creator of infinite voids?

God!
Is it really possible for you
to remain intact
after occupying my world of thoughts?
Or
you do not exist
and so
the rumours of your existence are spread continually.

God!
You are the formlessness
of my optionless intellect,
of my knowledge and ignorance,
or
an inconsistent compound
melting down in the intense light of the intellect.

God!
Who are you?
Are you timeless
or the vitality of the Stone Age?

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Are you ancient
Or a contemporary pathos?
Are you the same
who is idly dangling his feet
in the current of the present?
Or,
you do not exist
and only your shadow floats on the water.

God!
I am trembling.
A banyan tree of unknown fear
is rustling in my heart.
And the bats of conscience
are hanging upside down
on its branches.
My conscience is becoming regressive
like the aerial roots of a banyan tree.
God!
You must be killed.
It is necessary to uproot you completely.
God!
See I am in my senses.
God!
See I have gathered courage
God!

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A born hunter is becoming alert.
A sceptic living on the cells of brain
is sharpening weapons.
God!
I am brandishing weapons
of rationality and irrationality,
of thoughts and desires,
of morality and immorality.

God!
Now you are my prey.
I am stabbing you wildly.
Visible are your injured organs.
Yet
you are not dying, God.
And as soon as you find a crevice
you enter into the innermost self
and nip the sceptical mountain in me ,
strike the chisel against the stony heart.
You disappear
slipping out of the three dimensional vigilance.

God!
O God!
I sense
the conjunction of the duel rooted in me.

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We are the affirmation and the negation
of the same duel.
If you exist
then my life is meaningless.
And if my existence is ultimate
then you are a myth;
then false is the argument of your existence.
How hollow and painful it is
that both of us exist at the same time
or encompass each other?
God
I sense it myself.

And yet
God,
I make an appeal to you.
Be here though you do not exist.
God!
Descend as incarnation coincidently
and end this life of mine
as its one wheel is sinking into the mud of suffering
and the other is floating in the air.
God!
Listen to my appeal!
God!
Come and push me
into the terrible abyss of faith.

(*Translated from Marathi by Dileep V. Chavan*)

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55

Prabhakarrao

(In memory of Prabhakar Bhalerao)

Prabhakarrao,
you have suddenly descended
in a different space;
started a journey
of halo.
you are on the way now
in search of an unknown book.
I am standing
in front of your extinguished vivacity
with the fire of flared up questions
in my head.

Who are you
and who am I?
While drifting away
in this flow of time
the log with the help of which
you decided to go across
my fate as well.
An inexpressible fondness
was making possible
a dialogue between us
and a heterogeneous network
of intellect holding an end of which
you straightway went away.
More complications increased
for those left behind.

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Disrupting time
your body suddenly became quiet.
The heart
as big as a fist
with which you groped
this vast world
rejected the extremist domination
of intellectualism.
The heart as big as a fist
in the damp circumference of which
you sowed intimate bonds;
that heart as big as a fist
closed down untimely
like a book.
Your eyes were paths
to descend into the head;
from those paths
the light of wisdom would enter;
now they have become barren tunnels.
Your eyes flew away
overcoming death.
All parts of the body
after getting loose
became unknown in formalin;
only the soul escaped like entropy.

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Protecting and allowing every tree to grow
you built a dense forest of books;
against the culture without decency
you struggled for a dream;
the one in minority like me
has the protection
of the shade of that forest.

I got myself lost in the same forest
a thousand times.
I improved the rhythm of my breaths,
brought the momentum of an arrogant heart
under control.
I drank water from a spring of sorrow
in the hard rock;
made a bond with
the soil of compassion;
while coming out of
the middle of the forest
I am still standing firm.
But crumbling within
the crag of the soul is collapsing;
the shore of faith
has become distant long back.

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Under the scorching sky
outside the forest
on the barren ground
where nothing survives
except the cactus,
which branch should I use
to survive?

What can I learn now?
And learn from what?
From living or dying
even if you use
as many armours as possible,
death hums around the mind,
throws away ruthlessly
the illusion of being.
Now what can I do?

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56
Moral

The enlightened one reads
The history of human decency
In the eyes of the wise and sensible wife.

Gulping down the lump in the throat
The wife hides her disrupted mind
And rests her head on the shoulder
Of the enlightened one.

A layer of realization of guilt floats
On the face of the enlightened one.
The moment a slight tinge of pain
Is seen, it disappears.

The enlightened one starts getting stuck up
In the mire of memories.
A long hair and threads of old dreams
Get stuck up
In the button of the long shirt
Of the enlightened one

The sensible wife has no trouble of dreams
No history, certainly no future peeps
In her domestic hackwork.

If at all the sensible wife

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Gets a spare hour
She sits with a bundle of torn
And shrunk clothes
Of the children before her.
Or at the most
The torn petticoat, a needle and thread.
Or a month-old letter from a mother's home
A ball pen or
A page from the notebook of her son.

The news of the world is poured
In the brain of the intelligent one
By an English fortnightly.
Chernobyl is remembered
With the mention of Gorbachev.
The enlighetened one
Gets lost in public procession
With moral stupor.

Two and a half rented rooms
Of the enlighetened one
Crawl and spread over the longitude
Trying to embrace both the poles.

The life of the sensible wife at forty
Is born newly everyday

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And stays for only eighteen hours.

According to the laws of nature
Children grow
In the desert between
Intelligence and emotions.

The family of the enlightened one
And the sensible one
See ideal democracy
In the mirror of destiny.
enlightened ones are there
Because of democracy
Or democracy is there
Because of sensible intellectuals.

The Moral: there is no alternative to destiny!

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57

Trees Are No More What They Used To Be

Now trees are no more
What they used to be.
Growing as they wished
Offering shade to others
Affectionate--
Now all the environment around
Has changed.

Trees would get hot
Under the scorching sunlight.
Enduring the tropical summer
They would save every drop of water.
Their trunks would
Swell round, fleshy and thorny;
Sticky and glassy fluid
Would gather in the blades;
Even then tolerating
they used to stand
firmly on the ground tenaciously.

Now trees are no more the same:
themselves spoiling their leaves.
Trunks, getting violent
Are trying to devour
Baby birds in the cavity.
Branches don't allow birds
To perch on them.

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Flowers devour butterflies.

Now the high-born roots
Come out in the sun
To sit in the open;
Stirring poison in the minerals of water;
Stealing light from the glowworm
and are getting energy by any means.
Trees are turning time and space
Taking blind postures of rebellion.

Trees are searching
For cosmos in emptiness.
The frantic form of Shiva's Tandava is entering
The interiors of trees!

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58

A Poet

(*For Chandrakant Deotale*)

Words are not just sounds
Not mere concepts.
There is a destructive energy
At the core of words
That leaps out
After crushing against other words.

Poets too, like words
Crash against the dark shadows of others
Carrying in their hearts

Words constantly struggle to stay alive.
They find their existence
Amid the very conflict.
Just like poets

Words can never be
Either signs or codes,
Like poets, who cannot be
Without the association of other words
Without relationships and nature.

Every word in the poet's brain
Keeps expanding
And becomes a gigantic tree
Whose roots pierce the heart

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In search of moisture.
A poem is a forest
In the brain of a poet.
And in its fresh light he looks for
Dreams,
A spring,
And the lost man.

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E)
Poems from
Dik-kal
(Time and Space)

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59
Not For Me

Not for me an alphabet which,
Having forsaken its assimilated shape
sits shriveled.

Not for me words erupting
without wetness of experiences.

Let the inner be within and external outwards.
Not for me a language that keeps watch over the middle.

Not for me the poetry
darkened by uprooting the surrounding light.

Not for me the inopportune awakening
that denies nonbeing, trapped in being.

(Translated from Marathi by Vishnu Khare)

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60
Detachment

Words did not find exact places
In the lines of a poem
Or did lines get bewildered
While searching for words?

Did I get entangled
In the net of words unawares?
Or did language drag itself
While living through bits?

I covered myself with language
In the cold outside to feel warm.
Or did I get the dampness of language
After an inner singe?

Due to obstinacy for ease
Language hardened getting flat
Or was the experience lost in the attractive conclusion
Due to invisible subtleness of language?

While moving away
Shadows and poems got extinguished.
Or did the brain became inimical with the heart
And pushed me in detachment?

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61

In Many Times at the Same Moment

Living many times
At the same moment
living at many places
At the same time
To become timeless
Getting entangled in many creatures
At the same time
And yet remaining free.

Whatever the life of a poet,
A poem is like an aquarium.
If you go on watching
You can clearly see the house beyond
Clearly are seen places in every word
And space in every line

When you concentrate your eyes on fish
You don't feel anything from the past.
What should the observer see exactly?
The crystal house of language?
The world beyond?
Or experience gliding in meaning?

Whatever you see
A genuine poem has to brighten up
A mysterious dark corner.

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62

Could not Write

The heart flowed
With both shores overflowing.
Both shores were
Soaked in the embrace.
I descended in the body
Like morning sunlight
Entering the river.
I dissolved my different identity
But could not write a good love poem.

What is needed after all
For a good love poem?
The passion of love
Must certainly be useless.
And how can a genuine love poem
Be on the body?

If there are no questions
Which don't strike the roots
How can a poem get
A throbbing heart and
An agonized mind?

Only since recent times
When all emptiness is felt
I feel free from within.

Only since recent times
The rock inside is getting exposed.
Perhaps the roots of a possible love poem
Must be in it!

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63

Rowdiness

I did not specifically discard the mark
on the forehead and the cymbals
in spite of getting caught up with
recalcitrant time.
Saint Tukaram did not descend
in the pilgrimage Dehu of the body.
Even the god Vithal was not found
as he was caught in the whirlwind

Vithal did not imprint my worldly branches,
did not remove the little
talkative monsters of lust;
did not set my I-ness in the muteness;
did not sweep away the collyrium
from the open eyes.

Did not dim the agile, clever brain;
did not plaster the holes of my ears;
could not stop a quarrelsome woman;
could not deprive wife and children.

Now getting immersed in household
the world does not appeal;
why just Vitthal but even Tukaram
should come walking to me
and prove his existence
inspiring an *abhang* within me
with which will stop automatically
This inner mess of split.

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64

Nature and Man : 1

A terrible storm of the organization of atom
Inside the sun.
The sky has no awareness of even
Spreading splendor.

Anarchy of green leaves
On the body of the tree.
It has no awareness of even
Providing creatures with food.

A terrible riot of millions of drops.
At the core of clouds
They have no awareness of even
Pouring rain on the earth.

Life is caught up in the strong net
Of experience.
Is there no human without
The awareness of give and take?

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65

Nature and Man : 2

Balancing of stars in the sky
Balancing of planets around
By the sun;

Water and earth sensibly balancing
Each other;
Balancing of no-atom particles
By molecules and sub-molecules.

Cells cannot survive
Without each other;
Tissues and body parts
Are not mutually complete
Without each other.

How human beings cannot
Balance each other from within?

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66

Relationship

What is adrift goes on becoming pure.
It overcomes all barriers easily.
Dried leaves do not gather at its bottom
Whose transparent body automatically
Brightens in the sunlight.

If gathered at one place it gets spoiled.
Caught up in silt
It rots and becomes murky.
Microbes grow in it
For the lack of air:
Killing patience is debilitating.

Whose responsibility is it
To keep it adrift?
And preserve it healthy
Who needs it for a moment
In the hectic daily life?

Who wants to spend life by its shore?
Who wants to avoid temporal time?
Does one need to be the Lord Shiva
Drinking the poison of depression?

The one whose one foot is in the farm
And another in the lake

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Is bound to have one foot in relationship
And another in trouble.
Who said both the shores
Of this illusory river must be alike?

And who has experienced it
Even after life is on a downslide?

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67

Partner

Have I been wrong since the beginning?
This one is like this
That one like that
Yet another one like that
This one behaved like this
That one behaved like that
Yet another one like that
This one said like this
That one said like that
yet another one like that.

This one said to him like this
That one said to him like that
This one said about me like this
He said about this one and that one
To me like this and that.

What is this happening
Around me including me?
Why no one behaves naturally?
Why everyone behaves nicely?
How is it
That good means bad for everyone?
Everyone is shuffling cards carefully.
How every partner wants to win
Using one of the other trick?

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Does one's perimeter
Go on shrinking with age?
Does the hidden dot
Suddenly get exposed?
Does selfishness build around oneself
A philosophical cocoon?
Do wings grow to this existence
Just for this?

Everyone wants a strong wall
Between oneself and the others.
Everyone wants to be a double-faced
God like Janus.
Have I been wrong since the beginning?

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68

The Fear

Holding the finger of a snail
A stark black queer shape
Is coming
With careful footsteps
And spreading a terrible terror.

Are you scared now of death
After the fear of giving birth is gone?
Is anything left to suffer?
Or to do something for somebody?
Terror of what? Terror for what?

Are you afraid of pangs of death
A little of the body and the little of the mind?
Are you afraid to understand halfway
When you were stubborn?
Are you afraid
This world will slip away from our hands
Before a dialogue?

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69

Frantic Dance

A frantic dance of dark red flowers
Will begin when eye-scorching sunlight
Will flare up.

Shedding leaves grown earlier on the -silk cotton tree
Full-grown bloodied flowers will grow
All over the body.

Then the coral tree with weak branches
Will go on brushing sunlight
With a comb-like blossom of flowers.

It will be followed by
The blossom of a spathodia.
It will scoop orange powder
Through blackish green leaves.

Then the passionate gulmohur
All over the road
Maintaining the thriving of crowded flowers.
With sparse fresh leaves
Its shapely branches will be
On the verge of gyrating.

In the end there will be
The frenzy of the shapeless flame of the forest.

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It will stand with the anarchy of branches.
Unless the entire green expanse is subdued
It will not be able to ignite
The forest with orange flowers.

It will be forgotten in the rush of trees
When all its flowers, one by one,
Will shrivel and get mixed up with the soil.

And if at all it remains
It will only be in the form of
Torn plates and bowls
Made of dried leaves!

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70

Sky-bound Roots

A few trees are standing shrunk
By the roadside,
With the fear that
When the road will be made four-lane
They will be chopped off.

These terrorized trees
Shrouding the blanket of terror
Will disappear overnight
And reach some city.
They will establish their homes
On some barren piece of land
And will stand shrunk with guilty faces
In a row
Trees are so few
They can be counted on fingers.
Or are they not useful
To politicians or social workers
Or environmentalists?
When would these trees
With sky-bound roots and earthbound branches,
The branches holding people's feet firmly
Strangle their necks with the roots
And topple down the protected world of man?

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71

Love Song of an Old Man

Mad love-song at this age
Neither means affection for body.

Nor the shadow of
The erotic tree hidden in the mind.

Not even aware of
The desire in the subconscious.

No song in this age
Just sitting with a bait in the water
Nor just living, nor departing!

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72

A Poem Not In Verse

The mind does not get quiet. Extreme gloom is felt.
The mind and intellect, since I began to understand, are going in different directions. I cannot behave the way I feel and understand by the intellect. Not everyone has the same role to play and at every place. They don't have inner association. To live with a mask means, to be practical. Nevertheless there is some arrangement going on unknowingly in brain-mind which is understood later to have your own identity or image. How transparent are we? Perhaps only to the extent of convincing others. Did I know what I want out of this life? Perhaps I don't understand what I want. When I understood it, it must have been youthful, something touching our dreams. Or it must be its expansion. No intellectual decisions in that. No deeper speed of the mind. No desperate attempt for that. No self-devastating oneself for it. No wish to give any importance to it. Whatever I did was just an attempt to fill up time. It was just a temporary investment. There was nothing pre-planned; whatever good or bad happened at the material level. It happened in the drift. I glued to it some philosophical reason and drew a self-portrait which had no value. I deceived myself during the entire journey. I could not chop off the grass growing on our body or covering us. I did not have that much of strength, nor did we try to get that strength. I went on whirling in the whirlwind of something automatic. Was the rebellion against middle-class stability, of feeling superficially, ideal? That idealism and action were

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not realized in life. Very dense and black darkness is visible everywhere. Do I have to become inactive getting stuck up in that darkness? I wanted to escape dissolving time and space in poetry but could not.

*****

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F)

Uncollected Poems

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73

Mahatma: 1

For a child of my age,
those were the days of sneaking and chasing the butterflies...
I was walking with my father,
holding his hand.
Both were silent.
That was some garden in Hyderabad,
unknown to me.
Baag-e-Aam or Naampalli, don't remember now.

Negotiating our way through a few cars
and so many two-wheelers parked in rows,
we reached that ground.

The ground was a thick jungle of gloomy faces
Whispers in tremulous voices could be heard all over...

One after another, they would come up on the stage restlessly
and speak between choked up sobs.
At times, sparks of words would scintillate
from the loudspeaker.

Why have so many of them assembled?
Why these profuse streams of tears?
Why these clouds of grief,
thickened in the whole atmosphere?

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What is sorrow?
What is death? What is assassination?
And why are so many of them mentioning only one name?
... I was too young to understand all this.

Years later did I realize
why my father's grip over my hand was tightening
with every sob.

Bapu,
I represent that generation
which heard your name for the first time
only after your assassination.

And now that I stand on the shores of
the flux of time,
even after so many years,
the same is heard, and in a similar way.

Now violence is
the wild flower
flourishing on the creeper of self-pride...

Bapu,
is this the country that is really yours?

(*Translated from Marathi by Pradeep Deshpande*)

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74
Mahatma: 2

I've been to Delhi often...
Couldn't ever go to Rajghat
and pay homage at your Samadhi.

It's forty-two years now
since I went to Delhi for the first time
with a friend...
On the first day, I was busy in my work.
Watched a play at Paharganj that night
Only Advani and his whole family in the front row
reserved for the invitees,
and hardly nine select people, in the back row,
who had bought tickets for the play.
The performance was wonderful, though...
Remember Uttara Bavkar even up to this moment!

Tomorrow, the only thing to be done was
to go to Rajghat and come back, I decided.

But the next day proved bizarre.
Shops trains transport hotels all remained closed.
Don't know whether the bandh was spontaneous
or from some nameless terror,
but a pre-riots Delhi could be seen on every street.
That was the day of the first death anniversary
of Indira Gandhi, I came to know later.
Didn't have enough money to pull on one more day
in Delhi
nor was there any acquaintance in the vast city then.

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Later, years later, went to Rajghat.
From the very entrance,
the touching grace made me solemn.

Trees softly humming the songs of the rustle of leaves,
and the mysterious wind coming from the unknown...
I was enchanted,
was hypnotized by the serenity in the atmosphere.

Bapu,
with eyes closed,
I sat by your Samadhi for a long time.
Self-purification, love, compassion, tolerance
were the flowers you loved.
I opened my eyes and sensed —
those flowers you loved are dead flowers now
and are lying scattered all over your Samadhi...

How phenomenal, how complex is this experience —
Seemingly, all extremely blissful
and, at the same time,
deep, deep within, a cloud of sorrow
is gathering roots...

Bapu,
I have cherished this experience too up to this moment!

(*Translated from Marathi by Pradeep Deshpande*)

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75
Mahatma: 3

Like a migratory bird
I have come to this country unknown to me
and, amazed, am standing before the closed gate of a bungalow
surrounded by trees.
It was this very house from where
you had launched the struggle for justice
about a hundred and twenty five years ago.

It was here that you saw the dreams
of changing the world of racial discrimination.
Dreams of the revolt, lay dormant until then
in the minds of the helpless masses
suppressed beneath the burden of history.
It was here that the unique seed of non-co-operation
had sprouted in your soul
and, with time, the seed had grown into a colossal tree.

Bapu,
I am standing here before your residence
in Johannesburg
where, once upon a time,
your footsteps were imprinted with self-confidence.
The wind here
has brought to me the mysterious scent of history.

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and the wondrous past is drifting slowly
before my eyes.
I am sitting here unravelling the enigmatic theorem:
whence must have come into your frail body
the moral strength of such fierce resistance
in this alien land!

You were not a prophet
nor were you a Nabi, a Saint or a Bhadant.
You were a sheer transparent honest human being.
In your nature was the advaita of
emotions and intellect.
The shadow of your compassion had sheltered
the entire mankind.

For you,
Love was Truth
Truth was God
and a multi-religious country—
the dwelling of God.

Power without truth
community without equality
and a leader without morality
were never acceptable to you.

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Bapu,
sitting before the statue of the Black Ironman
who was inspired by your life,
I wanted to write a glowing poem
of the salvation of the humankind.

But
in this Independent Republic Nation,
my pen, wallet, watch, mobile
... all has been looted in a non-violent way
by a few jobless youths
prowling around the toll-booth

and I am utterly confused
and am asking myself—
Where am I?
Am I sure I am not in my own country?

(*Translated from Marathi by Pradeep Deshpande*)

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Selected Poems of Chandrakant Patil in English translation by various translators presents an impressive sampling of the poet's penetrating poems on a myriad of themes. Even when translated into English, a language that has no familial relationship with Marathi, the pungency of the poems sears through. One can then imagine how powerful they must be in the original. Irony and pathos, metaphor and metonymy serve as vehicles of Patil's inquisitive faculty, guided strongly by a rational mind yet completely in the embrace of an enamoured muse. For the non-Marathi reader, Patil's poems would indeed be a striking discovery, like a seafaring captain spots a new strand of land.

A. J. Thomas
Guest Editor, *Indian Literature.*

Chandrakant Patil has long been a towering presence in the sathottari period in both the Marathi and the Hindi world of writing. He is one of the most significant critical voices in the two literatures, an editor, a critic, a translator but most importantly a poet in Marathi and Hindi. His work instantiates the multilingual richness of his Marathwada roots which he has consistently tended in his poetry and in his many translations. This book of translations of Chandrakant Patil's own poetry brings into the reading world of English readers a notable part of his lifework, which is his poetry in Marathi. As the first such attempt to locate the lifelong poetic career of Chandrakant Patil in translation, this book is invaluable to readers of modern Marathi and English poetry.

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